George L. Kline (Ed.)

SOVIET EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

THIS volume of essays deserves a wide reading in the entire free world. It deals with a subject of vast importance. Because of the role of education in the Soviet state, no one can understand the nature and potential of that state without knowing something about its system of schools.

To be sure, we have many limited accounts and expositions of Soviet education. But they have been written either by official Communist spokesmen or by visitors and students from other countries who for the most part were constrained to limit their observations to outward forms and appearances. The merest novice in the realm of Soviet affairs knows that when he reads an article or book, or scans a table of statistics, bearing the imprint of Moscow, he must always wonder what is fact and what is fiction. In a land where a truthful account of well-documented historical events may be damned as 'bourgeois objectivism,' where statistics may be used by the highest organs of scholarship as a 'political weapon,' or where the long-established meanings of words may be banished from the dictionary by political fiat, the inquirer from a free society must be reminded constantly of *Alice in Wonderland* or of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

Each of the nine essays included in these pages was written by a former Soviet citizen who had spent years both as student and as teacher in Soviet educational institutions. Taken together therefore they constitute the first attempt on a significant scale to present a picture of Soviet education from the inside. They may be compared with the accounts of life in Soviet prisons and forced labour camps written by former inmates after escaping to the West. These accounts bear little resemblance to the Communist theory of 'corrective labour' as a means for the moral rehabilitation of the 'criminal.' And so, hereafter, no one can write intelligently about Soviet education without reviewing the testimony presented in this volume.

The essays, it should be noted, do not give or pretend to give a comprehensive account of the entire Soviet system of education from the revolution down to the present. They are but fragments of such

an account. They are confined to certain institutions and to certain limited periods of time. They tell us comparatively little about conditions following the close of the Great Patriotic War. Nevertheless they should be invaluable to any serious student of the Soviet state and world Communism.

In order to assist the reader to see these essays in perspective a few words about the role of education in the Soviet state would seem to be appropriate. Communist spokesmen, whether inside or outside the Soviet Union, never tire of singing the praises in most extravagant terms of the Soviet system of education. It is the 'most advanced in the world'; it expresses the most fully developed 'ideological convictions'; it assures the 'harmonious development of the intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and physical powers' of the individual; and it is committed without reservation to the great cause of 'peace, democracy, and the liberation of oppressed peoples everywhere.' It is guided in all of its operations by the oft-quoted dictum of the 'Great Stalin': 'People must be grown carefully and tenderly, just as a gardener grows a favourite fruit tree.' A recent edition of the official textbook on the theory and practice of Soviet education for the training of secondary school teachers closes with these words: 'The system of people's education in the Soviet Union has no equal in the entire world.'

In spite of the great changes which have marked the course of Soviet education since 1918, and they have been very great indeed, its most fundamental and distinctive features have survived the passing of the years. These have to do with the role of education in society, the scope of the educational undertaking, and the locus of power and authority.

The role of education in Soviet society is essentially and profoundly political. Standing on the foundations of their special version of the historical materialism of Marx and Engels, the Soviet authorities subscribe unreservedly to the dogma that throughout history organised education has been the handmaiden of politics, that the very idea of the school functioning outside of politics is, in the words of Lenin, 'a lie and an hypocrisy,' that since the dissolution of primitive tribal society education has always been the servant of the ruling class, that this was the condition in the slave-holding societies of antiquity and in the feudal order of the Middle Ages, and that it is the condition in contemporary capitalistic society everywhere, regardless of differences in political forms and ideologies. The true Bolshevik scoffs at the very idea of 'freedom in education' in any 'bourgeois state.' Applying this dogma without qualification on coming to power in 1917, the Bolsheviks established an open and avowed dictatorship in the name of the 'proletariat' and

moved to convert the entire educational system into an instrument wholly and militantly committed to the achievement of their purposes.

The way in which education is conceived in the Soviet Union was outlined with utter clarity by Lenin in a passage which is more widely quoted today than when he was alive. 'In the field of people's education,' he wrote, 'the Communist Party sets itself the aim of concluding the task begun by the October Revolution of 1917 of converting the school from a weapon for the class domination of the bourgeoisie into a weapon for the destruction of this domination, as well as for the complete destruction of the division of society into classes. The school must become a weapon of the dictatorship of the proletariat.' Stalin, as was his habit, put the matter even more bluntly in a conversation with H. G. Wells in 1934. 'Education is a weapon,' he said, 'whose effect depends on who holds it in his hands and who is struck with it.' This means that the teacher is regarded as a soldier in the great battle for the ultimate victory of Communism both at home and abroad, and a soldier 'standing in the advanced line of fire.'

One of the first impressions gained by a visitor to the Soviet Union or a student of Soviet cultural affairs is that education is extremely broad in conception and scope. As a matter of fact it embraces the entire cultural apparatus, all of the agencies involved in the moulding, the training, and the informing of the minds of both young and old. It of course includes the school system from nursery school and kindergarten to university and scientific institute, as well as a wide range of institutions designed to give specialised training at different levels. Indeed, it includes three important systems of schools—the system of people's schools as suggested above, the system of military schools, and the system of Party schools. But it also includes the press in all of its forms and manifestations—the newspaper, the periodical, the book, the library, the bookstore, and even the lowly calendar. It includes the newer media of mass communication such as the radio and television. It includes all agencies of amusement and entertainment—the theatre, the moving picture, the circus, the playground, the club, the museum, and the public park. It includes the ideological aspects of works of literature, music, graphic art, science, scholarship, and philosophy. It includes the political and cultural phases of all organisations, and particularly the organisation of children and youth. It even includes the process of oral persuasion which through the activities of a disciplined Party membership of eight millions is carefully organised and reaches the most distant villages and the far borders of the Union. Prior to the radical reorganisation of the early thirties most of these interests were

administered through the peoples' commissariats of education in the several Union republics.

The third characteristic feature of Soviet education has to do with the locus of power and authority. Who holds this powerful weapon, or battery of weapons, in his hands? In design the control is emphatically *monolithic*. Regardless of the forms of administration, which recognise the organs of the Soviet Government and the political divisions and sub-divisions of the country, official control of this vast educational enterprise in all crucial matters rests squarely in the hands of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Neither the citizens nor the ordinary Party members participate in the process of decision-making unless they are invited to do so. Moreover, teachers and educators as such are essentially technicians who are supposed to translate into practice the general and specific directives formulated by the Party leadership. This does not mean that they may not on occasion influence that leadership. But, when they do, they must take care lest they overstep the boundaries imposed by the totalitarian nature of the Bolshevik state. The history of Soviet education is strewn with the wrecked lives of teachers and distinguished educators who for one reason or another found themselves convicted or suspected of espousing 'counter-revolutionary' doctrines, or of failing to follow with visible enthusiasm changes in the Party line. A well-known professor may have his doctor's degree revoked because the position taken in his dissertation years before is declared mistaken by the Central Committee. It is not surprising therefore that the author of a textbook in modern history or even in educational psychology may confine his citations of authority to the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin. The Central Committee issues endless decrees on matters ranging from the length of the recess period in the primary school to questions of co-education and the content of a textbook in science. With the repudiation of Stalin his name will probably disappear from educational literature.

In general structure the Soviet system of people's schools follows the traditional pattern of the Western world. Perhaps one might add that it combines certain features of the American and the German system. Imperial Russia had been profoundly influenced by the latter. At the base of the structure are the nursery, the nursery school, and the kindergarten which serve only the smallest fraction of the children of appropriate age. Above these pre-school institutions is a ten-year middle school which enrols children normally from seven to seventeen years of age. This school is composed of three units—a four-year primary school, a three-year junior secondary school, and a three-year senior secondary school. In some rural communities the

primary school stands alone. In some other communities the primary school and the junior secondary school are combined to form the seven-year or the incomplete middle school. In the larger communities the ten-year or complete middle school is the prevailing pattern. The Sixth Five-Year Plan calls for universal education through the tenth grade by 1960. Above this institution are the higher schools with programmes embracing from four to six years and with provision for graduate work leading to the doctorate of science. Altogether there are approximately nine hundred higher schools of all types, of which thirty-three are classified as universities and the remainder as technical or scientific institutes. The Soviet system includes no college of liberal arts and all of the faculties in the higher schools, including the universities, prepare students for professional careers. Branching out from this central stem of the Soviet system of people's schools is a great variety of schools for training Soviet youth for occupations of lower and middle qualification.

It is within this broad framework of conceptions and institutions that these essays should be read. Their basic contribution resides in the realm of the intangibles. They reveal clearly the reality which lies behind or beneath the façade of forms, decrees, claims, and statistics which the student encounters in official pronouncements and even in personal visitation of Soviet schools. One conclusion stands out clearly. Due to the recalcitrance of human nature, the system is by no means as monolithic in its operations as it appears to be from the outside. For this revelation alone the essays are invaluable to all who would understand the strange world of Bolshevism.

It is possible that the post-Stalin era will witness eventually basic changes in Soviet education. Evidences of such changes, however, have not yet appeared. The reader should remember too that these essays are all confined to the period of Stalin's rule.

New York City,
April, 1956

GEORGE S. COUNTS

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN THE USSR

by Nina M. Sorochenko

I. Introduction

SOON after the October Revolution a Division for the Protection of Mother and Child was established in the People's Commissariat of Public Health. Nurseries, for children aged six weeks to three years, were administered by this agency; kindergartens, for children aged four to seven, were under the jurisdiction of the People's Commissariat of Education.

During the 1920s and 1930s the rapid expansion of the network of nurseries and kindergartens was viewed by Soviet authorities as essential if Soviet women were to combine 'active participation in the building of socialism' with 'happy motherhood.'[1] (Cf. Article 122 of the Soviet Constitution of 1936.) In Lenin's words, such institutions served to liberate woman from the 'petty household tasks and constant poverty [which] crush, stifle, stultify, and degrade her.'[2]

'To draw the woman into socially productive work,' Lenin declared, 'to extricate her from domestic slavery, to free her from dulling and demeaning subjection to the monotonous and confining environment of kitchen and nursery—this is the main task.'[3]

[1] According to Soviet sources, the number of nurseries and kindergartens in Tsarist Russia, even as late as 1915–16, was negligible (not more than 300 of the latter); in contrast, by 1939, there were 25,000 kindergartens with more than a million children, 50,000 nurseries with seven million, and an additional 150,000 seasonal nurseries with four million children. (Official Soviet statistics.) [In terms of percentages, however, only about 7 per cent of children in the appropriate age groups actually attend Soviet nurseries; about 9 per cent attend kindergartens. These figures have not increased substantially since World War II. One reason for the relatively small percentages is that parents must pay between 25 and 35 per cent of the actual cost of maintaining their children in nursery or kindergarten. Cf. N. DeWitt, *Soviet Professional Manpower. Its Education, Training, and Supply,* Washington, D.C., 1955, p. 8.—Ed.]

[2] Lenin, V. I., *Sochineniya* [Works], 3rd ed., XXIV, 344.

[3] *Op. cit.*, XXV, 64.

Soviet writers, following Lenin's lead, insist that nurseries and kindergartens in capitalist countries merely facilitate the exploitation of female labour in factory and office, whereas in the Soviet Union such institutions make it possible for women to take part in 'socially useful work and studies.'[1] According to the Soviet press, a million new women workers were drawn into productive occupations during the early 1930s, the period of the great upsurge of industrialisation. Family life had already changed drastically; the average family now had one, or at most two, children. And in nearly every case both the mother and the father had to take jobs in order to make ends meet. In consequence, the child (or children) was placed at a tender age in a Soviet nursery.

The Soviet mother does not go to work in field or factory out of any enthusiasm for 'building a new world.' She does not bring her only child to a nursery at dawn, or—in winter—before daylight, out of faith in the virtues of the Soviet educational system. Rather, she does these things from the pressure of grinding necessity. (Dependents, it should be recalled, received only about half the bread ration of 'productive workers.')

In the 1920s and early 1930s there were two groups of children who presented special problems:

(1) The *besprizornye*. As a result of the famine conditions of the early 1920s and the 1933 famine in the Ukraine, hundreds of thousands of orphaned children were set wandering up and down the Soviet Union, chiefly on the buffers of railroad cars. Later many of them were brought together in children's homes (*detdomy*).

(2) 'Fatherless' children. During the 1920s and early 1930s, with the wide acceptance of the theory and practice of 'free love' and the 'withering away of the family,' many children were left in public institutions by their unmarried mothers. After 1936, however, with the official repudiation of these attitudes and practices, the number of children born out of wedlock decreased markedly.

II. Organisation of Nurseries and Kindergartens

Soviet nurseries are classified as urban or rural.

Urban nurseries include house nurseries, which care for children in a particular apartment house or block; factory nurseries and nurseries in institutions of higher education (the latter were primarily intended for children under one year of age); district nurseries, serving a certain number of homes or small enterprises; and specialised nurseries—health institutions of a sanatorium type, mostly

[1] *Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya* [Large Soviet Encyclopedia], 1st ed., Vol. 43 (1939), pp. 698, 699, 703.

located outside the city limits, for convalescent children, tubercular children, or those with whooping cough and similar contagious diseases.

Rural nurseries include permanent nurseries, which care for children in the large sovkhozes and kolkhozes; seasonal nurseries, which function only five to seven months a year; and field nurseries, organised during sowing and harvesting campaigns.

Kindergartens are similarly classified as urban and rural, with corresponding subtypes. In addition there are outdoor kindergartens —a type of pre-school institution organised in the open air for children of both pre-school and early school ages (three to eight years) in factory districts and rural localities. Sometimes these kindergartens took children of nursery age—two to three years. Kindergartens for outdoor play were organised, especially after the war, in schools, apartment buildings and the 'children's cities' of the 'parks of culture and rest.' The latter were equipped with swings, slides, and 'jungle gyms,' as well as reading rooms, children's theatres and cinemas. On the average, the children spent eight to ten hours a day in such kindergartens.[1]

Children are normally admitted to Soviet nurseries at the age of four to six months, but, with special permission, they may be taken as young as six weeks. The average nursery has between twenty and 150 children, although some large factory nurseries have as many as 250. The most convenient number is eighty to one hundred, which permits division of the children into four or five age groups of twenty to twenty-five each. A typical breakdown is the following:

(1) Younger nursing infants—from six weeks to six months.
(2) Older nursing infants—six to twelve months.
(3) Younger group—from one year to eighteen months.
(4) Middle group—from eighteen months to two years.
(5) Older group—two and three years of age. (Children were often kept in this group until they were four, at which time they were put into kindergartens.)

Kindergarten children were usually divided into three groups:

(1) Younger—three and four years of age.
(2) Middle—four and five years.
(3) Older—five to seven years.

The larger kindergartens and nurseries included more than one group at each age level.

[1] *Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya*, 2nd ed., Vol. 14 (1952), p. 156; cf. also *Sovety vozhatomu* [Advice to the Pioneer Leader] (a collection of articles), Moscow, 1950.

Each group, whether in nursery or kindergarten, required one or two rooms for sleeping and daily use by the children, a veranda for play in bad weather, a reception room, dressing room, and isolation ward, with one or two cots. Also needed was a general isolation ward for sick children, especially if there was any suspicion of contagious diseases. These needs were actually met after the school year 1935–36, when many large modern buildings were set aside for use by the nurseries and kindergartens in large factories and enterprises. Before that, especially during the 1920s, the desperate economic condition of the country did not permit even an approximation to adequate facilities.

Since the war, special attention has been paid (according to Soviet sources) to increasing the number of rooms available to nurseries and kindergartens. A minimum of 5 per cent of the available space in new apartment buildings must be reserved for such use.[1] A decree of the USSR Council of Ministers dated October 25, 1948, stipulates that twelve places must be allotted in nurseries and kindergartens for every hundred women employed in a given factory or office. All enterprises employing more than 500 workers must provide nursery and kindergarten facilities. These facilities are financed by the institution in question, aided by allocations from the regional budget.

In general, it should be emphasised that the quality of Soviet nurseries and kindergartens before 1935 was very low (for details see below, sec. V), but substantial improvement, as well as standardisation of programmes and methods, was introduced after 1935-36.

III. Staff and Administration

The nurseries and kindergartens were staffed almost exclusively by women. The staff included the supervisor (or directress, as she was usually called in the larger institutions); a paediatrician and one or two trained nurses, in the larger institutions; an instructor in methods, who took the place of the directress in her absence; after 1935–36—a music teacher, who visited the various groups to give lessons, and planned and supervised the programmes for the revolutionary holidays; an administrative assistant to the directress (there was no such position in the smaller institutions; these duties were divided between the directress and the instructor in methods); and teachers and technicians, who were in direct charge of the children.

In a normal work day, lasting ten or eleven hours (from 6 or

[1] Decree of the USSR Council of Ministers, May 18, 1949. Cf. also *Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya*, 2nd ed., Vol. 14 (1952), p. 162.

7 a.m. to 4 or 5 p.m.), the teachers and technicians received overtime pay for two or three hours. In nurseries and kindergartens which had an extended day—lasting until 9 p.m.—there was a second shift which went on duty at 1 p.m. One hour was transitional; the teachers and technicians of both shifts took turns eating at this time, and the children had a 'rest hour' under the supervision of a nurse.

The nurseries and kindergartens attached to the larger factories and offices also had a night shift, to accommodate mothers who worked on different shifts successively, or those who lived at a great distance from their place of work. Usually the directress, paediatrician, and instructor in methods had quarters—or rather, single rooms—on the nursery or kindergarten premises.

In addition there were purely administrative personnel—a cook, cook's helpers, a laundress, and one or more janitors.

As a rule the directress was a Party member, often an 'activist' or 'Stakhanovite.' Kindergarten directresses were appointed by the Section of People's Education (ONO), nursery directresses by the Section of Public Health—in both cases with the approval of the local Party cell or district committee. It was through the directress that Soviet policy and ideology permeated into pre-school education.

The paediatricians, nurses, instructors, and teachers were all non-Party people, for the good reason that, until the Second World War, there were not nearly enough qualified Party members to fill such specialised positions. These non-Party people were clearly aware of the oppressive atmosphere of the nurseries and kindergartens before 1935 and the dreadful experiments being carried out on helpless children. But most of them said nothing, following without protest the twists of the Party line as it applied to educational policy. It should be said that, through all these twists, the paediatricians and nurses continued to perform a useful function.

The training of paediatricians, after 1937, was carried out in specialised faculties newly organised in Moscow, Leningrad, Omsk, and Rostov-on-Don. By 1939 (according to the *Large Soviet Encyclopedia*) there was a total of nineteen such faculties. Similar growth and specialisation can be traced in the technical schools and courses for preparing nurses. The teachers, instructors in methods, and, later, music teachers were trained in courses organised jointly by the Section of People's Education and Section of Public Health.

In admitting children to the nurseries and kindergartens, first priority was given to the children of workers, Red Army men, and the poorer peasants. Nurseries and kindergartens attached to factories gave first priority to children of the lowest paid workers.

In the early years no tuition was charged, but beginning in the late 1930s, with the general shift of Soviet enterprises to a self-supporting basis, nominal tuition fees were introduced in the case of children with both parents living. The fee varied according to the wage bracket and class status of the parents.

In each major kindergarten or nursery a council was organised, consisting of representatives of the factory parents' committee or the parents of a certain city district, together with the staff of the children's institution.

IV. Changing Policies in Soviet Pre-School Education

Five distinct periods, marked by sharply differing, sometimes contradictory, policies may be noted in Soviet educational theory and practice, including that of pre-school education.

(1) Emphasis upon ideological and political indoctrination (*politgramota*) (1918 to 1924–25).

(2) 'Polytechnical' education, with participation by pre-school-age children in adult work processes and procedures (1925 to 1930).

(3) Education by the 'project method,' in which the children carried out specific practical projects in field or factory (1930 to 1931).

(4) 'Paedological' control of the entire educational process, involving exhaustive psychological testing and retesting of each child, based on a doctrinaire environmental determinism (1931 to 1936).

(5) After July 4, 1936, when the entire 'paedological' experiment was condemned by the Party Central Committee as false, harmful, even criminal, there began a period of more or less normal 'Western' pre-school policy, with stress upon play, music, etc. Toys, dolls, fairy-tales—all of which had previously been banished—reappeared, together with childish fun and laughter.

I shall consider each of these periods in turn.

The period of ideological and political indoctrination was fertile in pompous decrees and militant slogans, but the indoctrination was often clumsy and ineffective, especially at the pre-school level. The teachers, most of whom were not themselves convinced Marxist-Leninists, repeated without enthusiasm sentences learned by rote to children for whom their words had no intellectual meaning or emotional impact whatever.

During this period I was not myself working in kindergartens or nurseries, but, since I had a close friend who was, I saw a good deal of their operation.

I recall vividly an instance of this inane indoctrination in the case

of a group of one-and-a-half- and two-year-olds in a nursery in Stalino in 1926. When I visited their class, the children were seated on drab bedding material on the floor of a grey-walled room with uncurtained windows, 'decorated' only by portraits of Lenin, Stalin, and Voroshilov. The children's eyes, in grey faces, were lustreless, lifeless, and without expression. The teacher was sitting in front of them on a bench and telling them something in a monotonous tone about 'Uncle Il'ich' [Lenin]. Neither in the expression on the teacher's face nor in the eyes of the children did I detect the slightest spark of interest in the 'great leader' and 'creator of the proletarian revolution.' Instead, I saw to my horror that all of the children were swaying to and fro like pendulums, sucking their thumbs with genuine concentration. There was something so shocking in this scene of monotonously swaying grey children's faces with lustreless eyes, and thumbs in mouths, that I instinctively retreated to the doorway and anxiously asked my instructor friend what the trouble was. Were these underdeveloped, defective children? No, they were normal. The fact was that, to protect themselves against adults who were trying to 'communicate' something which did not interest them in the least, they found solace and security in swaying back and forth and sucking their thumbs.

The two- and three-year-olds in this same nursery presented a similarly cheerless picture. When I arrived they were receiving their daily dose of *politgramota.* They sat in a semicircle on little benches in front of the teacher, who walked from portrait to portrait, pointing out the 'great leaders'—Lenin, Stalin, Voroshilov—and trying very hard, with minimum success, to impart some enthusiasm to her words. What she was saying had been learned by rote from current Communist slogans; it failed to produce any response whatever in the children. If only she could have told them, in her own simple but sincere words, something about these men which the children could have grasped, something which would have engaged their emotions —if, for example, she had told them how Il'ich, living in the Siberian taiga, had fed a little squirrel and hunted foxes; or how Stalin, as a poor Georgian boy, had climbed his native cliffs with his pet dog. But no. The teacher, who had been subjected to basic 'ideological' training in the courses at the Teachers' Training School, was afraid, with good reason, to deviate from the set pattern. She had seen friends and colleagues lose their jobs for just such deviation. So she continued to pour out false and empty words, while the children fidgeted on their benches; the livelier ones pinched and nudged one another, and others animatedly picked their noses.

Suddenly the monotonous recital was interrupted by the exclamation of a small, dark-haired boy with lively, mischievous eyes.

'Tanichka,'[1] he called to the teacher, 'give me a little flag! I'll march like a Red Army man beside Il'ich!' The other children came to life; their eyes began to shine. But 'Tanichka,' in the presence of an instructor and, what is more, of me—an unknown individual, for all she knew an inspector from the methods commission of the oblast People's Commissariat of Education—did not dare to interrupt her political indoctrination to let the children play.

Another instance: during a talk by the instructor in methods before Red Army Day, a bright, active four-year-old boy, having listened attentively to several sentences and apparently finding the talk uninteresting, slipped from his chair, crawled under the table, untied and removed his shoe and, dangling it by the laces through the slat over his head, lowered it to the floor and pulled it back up as though he were drawing water in a pail. Dragging the shoe along the floor, he made noises like a horse drinking and snorting. The other children brightened up and turned to watch this interesting game. The instructor, who was giving the talk in the absence of the regular teacher of the group, felt that she had to uphold not only her own authority but also that of the Red Army. The children, however, had already jumped up from their benches and were throwing themselves into the game. One of them cried: 'I'll be a Red Army man and you be my horse! Bring me some more water!' Another sat down on the floor and started to untie his shoe laces. The day's lesson in political indoctrination broke up in confusion!

Both the second and third phases—polytechnical education and the project method—consisted essentially of attempts to continue in practice the theoretical Marxist indoctrination begun in the first period.

Polytechnical education involved acquainting the children with the various materials used in industry and construction, as well as having them participate in work processes. Pre-school youngsters, of course, could not actually participate in work processes, but the teacher was supposed to accustom them to observing what was made, and how, and out of what materials. Instead of toys there were beams and blocks. School-age children learned various trades, worked at mills, drilled metal, and made simple furniture. Those of pre-school age were placed in 'work corners' furnished with materials used in production; in the early years this was simply rubbish, factory waste, metal scrap, pieces of wood, and bits of wire. Sometimes the more fortunate children had wooden blocks—roughly

[1] Soviet children regularly called their nursery or kindergarten teachers by their first names, often—as in this case—employing the familiar 'diminutive of endearment.'

hewn and unpainted, to be sure, but blocks nevertheless. These bits and pieces of building material gave these unhappy Soviet children, deprived of toys in the usual sense, an opportunity to exercise their imaginations and develop individual activity.

From time to time the children were taken to visit factories or construction projects in order to observe at first hand the various processes involved in production. Against the generally dismal, cheerless background of life in the children's institutions of this period, these excursions were occasions of great joy, lifting the youngsters for a time out of the boredom and monotony of every day into a fresh and exciting world of movement, crowds, colours, and new impressions.

These excursions were not without their humorous side. Once a two-and-a-half-year-old from a Kharkov nursery, after a preliminary 'political talk' in which Stalin was characterised as the 'great builder of socialism,' peered intently at the tiny figures of the construction workers crawling about on the lofty scaffolding of the construction project to which her group had been taken, and called excitedly to her teacher, 'O, Nadya! Look how many Stalins there are on the roof!'

Another positive feature of polytechnical education was that the children became accustomed to *working* in the kindergarten or nursery—putting their rooms in order, setting the tables, washing dishes, helping the younger tots. In addition, they were given opportunities to work outdoors 'in nature'—growing vegetables, flowers, etc. They helped build aviaries and aquariums and raise rabbits. All of these activities engaged the children's interest and gave them genuine enjoyment.

To comply with official insistence upon 'socially useful work,' various special 'days' were designated in rural nurseries and kindergartens—a 'day of struggle against insect and animal pests,' a 'bird day,' a 'forest day,' etc. The children went with their teacher to a sovkhoz or kolkhoz to pick insects off the plants, clear underbrush from the woods, or study the forest birds. They looked carefully into the nests for eggs or fledglings and were told how evil and senseless it was to destroy the nests or take the eggs.

Unfortunately, this aspect of polytechnical education was largely limited to children in rural nurseries and kindergartens. In the cities, especially in nurseries and kindergartens attached to factories, the chief emphasis was laid upon acquaintance with the processes of 'socialist' production and construction.

A recent Soviet text entitled *Kindergarten Teachers, on their Work*[1] considers, under the heading 'Nature Work,' problems of acquainting the child with nature, developing his curiosity and powers of observa-

[1] *Vospitateli detskikh sadov o svoei rabote*, Moscow, 1949.

tion, and teaching him to care for animals and plants. Here the bombastic, trite phrases about inculcating a 'materialistic conception of the world' are conspicuously lacking. The naturally thoughtful teacher, this text asserts, wants to develop in children a considerate attitude toward nature and an aesthetic appreciation of natural beauty. A story is told of how, under the difficult conditions of a city under siege, a teacher was able to teach children about dandelions, an elder bush, and a maple seedling which had escaped destruction during the bombardment, and was thus able to foster in them a considerate attitude toward living things, a sensitiveness to changes in their surroundings, and a lively interest in nature generally.

The project method was a further development of the procedures of polytechnical education, including actual participation of the older pre-school children in productive work—chiefly in agriculture (for example, cotton-picking or the harvesting of sugar-beet). Preparation for a given project was quite lengthy and complicated. The leader went for two weeks to a kolkhoz or sovkhoz and studied its peculiarities, needs, and weaknesses; then she took the older children with her and familiarised them with the place. Back at the kindergarten, discussions were conducted as to how best to aid the kolkhoz or its kindergarten or nursery. Plans and projects were formulated. After the project was completed, its accomplishments and shortcomings were further discussed.

In certain cases, four- and five-year-old children actually took part in the erection of new buildings. All the children learned appropriate songs, such as 'The Aid of Iron':

'The machine is our best friend,
It smooths collective labour! . . .'

Or, from the song 'Industrialisation':

'We're building factories,
Lots of machines,
Rushing to finish
The plan in four years.
. . . . . .
And now, children,
Into the shock brigades,
Our country calls us all
To help in the factory!'

The decree of 1931 on the 'organisation of paedological work' in Soviet nurseries and kindergartens did not displace polytechnical education or the project method. They continued as before, but were

supplemented by a battery of paedological tests and techniques. 'The pre-school age,' it was asserted, 'is the most crucial period for establishing the foundations of social personality. . . . This is the chief task of our Soviet paedologist.'[1] Paedological conferences were convened; teachers and paediatricians took special courses to prepare them to administer the new tests. Theoretical works in paedology, such as those of Zalkind and Blonski, were published, studied, and discussed.

The testing of children of pre-school age was exhaustive: facts about the occupation and environment of the child's parents and grandparents were dug out. The poor frightened mother was asked whether her grandfather on her father's side drank, whether her aunt thrice-removed was completely normal. Sometimes perfectly healthy and normal children, partly because of defects in the tests themselves, partly because of the examiner's lack of skill or experience, were classified as 'problem children' and subjected to special observation and supervision. Everything they said and did was noted down. If they began to kick, scream, stamp their feet, or pinch other children, the paedologists—instead of distracting them with something interesting, or simply standing them in the corner—gave them further tests and then transferred them to special children's institutions or groups for problem children. Thus normal youngsters were actually turned into problem children; they developed ugly habits—hitting, kicking, biting, etc.

On July 4, 1936, the Party Central Committee issued a decree 'On Paedological Perversions in the System of the People's Commissariat of Education.' Widely disseminated and discussed, it put an effective end to the 'paedological period' of Soviet education. Paedologists and paedological textbooks disappeared from the scene. Sharp criticism was levelled at the practice hitherto prevalent of subjecting young children, including those of pre-school age, to political and ideological indoctrination. Polytechnical education and the project method also came in for their share of criticism.

From the point of view of the teachers and children in Soviet nurseries and kindergartens, however, the most important aspect of the new shift in the Party line was the restoration of genuine *play*—of toys, music, fairy-tales, children's theatre—as a central element of the pre-school programme. Soviet critics now admitted that during the preceding period 'the basic activity of children—play—was suppressed; the children could never play. The brightest and most joyful things—dolls, fairy-tales and Christmas trees—were absent from the kindergartens and nurseries.'

[1] *Doshkol'noye vospitaniye* [Pre-School Education], No. 10-12 (1932), pp. 25-26.

The first thousand teachers and paediatricians to return from the conferences and requalification courses of 1936 were filled with enthusiasm for the new turn in policy and were genuinely optimistic concerning the further prospects of Soviet pre-school education.

V. Reminiscences of the Period before 1935

I have a number of vivid and dreadful memories of conditions in nurseries and kindergartens in Stalino and Odessa during the late 1920s. I recall the nursery in Stalino (this was in 1926), located in a fairly decent and relatively bright building, which stood out against the dark coal-dusty background of the city. But it would have been vain to expect to hear childish laughter, to see happy faces or bright colours in this house. The dormitory for the one- to one-and-a-half-year-olds was grey and bare; the windows were uncurtained, and there was no trace of greenery on the sills. Only three bright spots were distinguishable on the drab walls—the little red flags over the portraits of Lenin, Stalin, and Voroshilov. The floors were bare and colourless. The little folding beds, covered with khaki canvas, lacked both pillows and sheets. (To be sure, the children napped during the day with most of their clothes on, merely removing their shoes and undoing their belts.) The smallest children, who had just gone to sleep, were covered with scraps of grey or khaki blanket. Their faces, though pale and wan, were attractive in sleep. And a few of them had plump, rosy cheeks; these were the children of peasants who had only recently left the land to work in the mines and factories of the Donets Basin.

One of the little girls in this group was not sleeping; she was sobbing convulsively, looking at us from time to time with huge, tear-brimmed hazel eyes, full of fear and distrust. She kept her little hands under the blanket, as if hiding something. My friend, the instructor, told me that this little girl, Gannusya by name, had come to the nursery ten days before, bringing with her a small, bedraggled doll. This was the period when dolls and toy animals, regarded by Soviet authorities as 'harmful remnants of bourgeois education,' were categorically forbidden in Soviet nurseries and kindergartens. Gannusya's teacher sympathised with the child and tried to persuade her to part with her beloved 'Marusya'—even offering her bribes of sweets—but all to no avail. The directress, a convinced Party member, was adamant in upholding the prohibition against dolls in her nursery. Attempts were made to get the child's mother to take the doll from Gannusya at home and hide it. But the poor woman, almost in tears, explained that Gannusya never let it out of her hands: she ate with it, slept with it, and washed it when she had to wash herself.

In the nursery Gannusya regarded everyone who came near her as an advancing enemy. If anyone offered to so much as touch her doll, she screamed. And now, sobbing inconsolably, she gripped her precious Marusya under the blanket.

This incident moved and disturbed me deeply. In the small drama of Gannusya I saw the prototype of the great tragedy of the free individual, crushed and persecuted under the iron heel of a 'triumphant' Soviet regime. Later I learned from my friend that Gannusya, who dearly loved her teacher Nyuta, a kind and gentle girl, agreed after a week to let Nyuta take the doll occasionally for a short time. And Nyuta managed to do this just at those moments when the directress was visiting the group. Thus the difficulty was temporarily smoothed over. Later Gannusya began to play with rags which the teacher gave to the youngsters in her group—although with some misgivings as to the extent to which they met the demands of 'proletarian vigilance' and 'revolutionary influence.' The little girl gradually began to guard her doll less jealously, and in time gave in to the demands of her surroundings and relinquished her treasure altogether.

During this period, as a result of the general drabness and even squalor of Soviet nurseries and kindergartens and the mechanical conformity to an imposed routine, the moment of leaving a child was especially difficult and depressing for everyone. The reception rooms were usually set up in the corridor, without elementary conveniences, let alone comforts or luxuries. On the walls there were only portraits of the current leaders—no pictures, toys, or joyful patches of green. Everything was cheerless and official-looking. Such reception rooms, especially on cold, dark winter mornings, were overcrowded and filled with noise and confusion. Both mothers and children looked as though they had not had enough sleep. The children wailed, screamed, and protested generally against being left with the teachers. They did not want to stay in this dull, cold place, which was without joy, laughter, or anything that would interest a young child. The children knew they would have no toys here, while at home they had left either a favourite doll, which, though old and ragged, was nevertheless precious, or else gay pictures that grandmother had given them, torn from the pages of an 'old-regime' children's book, preserved—by some miracle—in the attic.

Today little Vova, upon awakening, had found under his pillow a whole fairyland world. (This was in Odessa in the winter of 1929.) There were pictures, torn out and pasted on cardboard, of a Christmas tree, a bunny, Mishka the bear, and Grandfather Frost. Mama, while getting Vova ready to leave for kindergarten, told him a wonderful story about a fir tree in the forest, a holiday in a cheerful home, full of light and childish laughter, where this tree stood,

iridescent in the sparkle of coloured balls, stars, and lights. And the most exciting thing was that mama herself had taken part in this holiday many times, had received gifts from under the tree like the other children. . . . But the wonderful story had to be broken off. It was time for mama to hurry to the factory and leave Vova at the kindergarten. On the way she sat in the tram with a severe expression, pursing her lips, her gaze concentrated, seeming to turn inward. She had told Vova not to dare tell anyone about the pictures or the story, and not to ask questions about them. Vova, by nature a very lively and curious boy, burned with a desire to learn more of that wonderful world. He had a thousand questions to ask, but he already knew that there comes a moment when mama, papa, and even beloved grandmother, change sharply, when they purse their lips, become severe and cold, and that at such times it is better not to ask questions. Vova saw that grown-ups feared something or someone and concealed from this something or someone such beautiful things as pictures and fairy-tales.

But today Vova had outwitted mama and was clutching in his little fist a tiny picture of a merry, red-nosed Grandfather Frost pulling a Christmas tree on a sleigh. In the kindergarten he immediately decided to tell Natasha, his beloved teacher, about all the wonderful things he had heard this morning, and to convince her of the truth of the story he showed her his picture. This produced a bewildering response: Natasha got very excited and grew pale. Mama behaved in a very strange and unfriendly way; she tried to tear the picture out of Vova's hands, whispering in an excited and angry voice: 'You wait, I'll talk to you at home! You bad bad boy! I warned you! . . .' The ensuing commotion attracted the attention of the directress, a one-hundred-per-cent 'conscious proletarian,' to whom the picture of Grandfather Frost represented a 'bourgeois remnant of mysticism and priestly deception.' It was just before Christmas, and a vigorous campaign was being waged—in the kindergartens as well as the factories—against everything connected with this 'bourgeois and pagan holiday.' Now both papa and mama would have trouble in the parents' district committee, and, what was worse, in the district committee of the factory where they worked.

VI. Reminiscences of the Period after 1935

In the new nurseries and kindergartens, most of which were built in the late 1930s, special halls or large rooms were set aside for music, rhythmics, and holiday celebrations. These rooms were usually equipped with a piano, gramophone, or, failing these, an accordion. The new nurseries and kindergartens also had specially equipped reception rooms with wardrobes and racks for the children's clothing

and special tables for changing diapers, which made it possible for the teachers and medical staff to perform all the necessary operations without fuss or bustle, and with a minimum of impatience on the part of the children. Everything was arranged so that the arriving child was not bored or nervous and did not interfere with the activities of the older children, but was immediately interested in something new that was within his grasp and inherently attractive.

The reception room itself was furnished in bright, cheerful tones. Potted plants and flowers stood on the window-sills. There was a separate corner with small chairs and tables piled with books and building materials. In this corner the child spent several minutes while his mother spoke to the directress, teacher, or paediatrician, or while he changed his home clothes for the clothing of the nursery or kindergarten—which in later years was quite colourful and frequently of good quality. The immediate aim was to draw the new child into play activities, since play was now acknowledged as the cornerstone of the whole nursery and kindergarten programme.

To be sure, the walls were hung with portraits of the 'beloved leaders' of the moment and placards with current slogans, as well as portraits of shock workers, Stakhanovites, outstanding parents and personnel of the nursery or kindergarten. This was for the adults. But for the children the walls of both the reception corners and play rooms were hung with colourful, artistically conceived diagrams and photographs, characterising various aspects of life in the nursery or kindergarten. There were also drawings and paintings, which were changed frequently to correspond with the seasons of the year or approaching holidays—pictures of childhood favourites: animals, birds, Petrushka, heroes of the marionette theatre. And it must be acknowledged that for the most part these diagrams, drawings, and paintings were executed with genuine originality and taste. The artists, illustrators, and draftsmen who did them took great joy in their work for children, thus making up in part for the hateful propaganda art—portraits of Party leaders, Stakhanovites, etc.—which they were forced to grind out.

In this gay and colourful atmosphere, rapport was readily established between teacher and child. New children, arriving for the first time, were given special attention, offered particularly interesting toys. The teacher would tell them stories and fairy-tales, pointing to the pictures on the walls. And where the teacher was indulgent, the new child was even given a few sweets and promised more when he had become part of the group.

In 1936 in Kharkov a friend of mine—a wonderful teacher and fine musician—and I decided to take the requalification course for

music teachers organised jointly by the Section of People's Education (for kindergartens) and the Section of Public Health (for nurseries). Both of us had worked previously as instructors of kindergarten teachers and instructors in methods, and we had been pained by the clumsy and doctrinaire teaching methods we saw in use, trying, where possible, to help teachers to comply formally with Party demands and yet permit some warmth and joy to enter into their relations with the children.

The requalification course took six months and was carefully organised. Naturally it included a standard dose of dialectical and historical materialism, Party history, and the Soviet Constitution. We submitted to this under compulsion, but we approached the rest of the curriculum, both theoretical and practical subjects, with genuine enthusiasm. Among the theoretical courses were anatomy and physiology of the child, psychology of the child, paedagogy, hygiene of childhood, and history of pre-school education. The, practical courses included piano-playing, voice (simplified voice-training and arrangement of children's songs and folk-songs), ballet (study of the basic positions of classical ballet), the combined movements of folk-dances, rhythmics, and physical education.

After six months we took examinations given by a mixed commission from the People's Commissariat of Education and the Section of Public Health and received appointments to various kindergartens and nurseries. Twenty teachers graduated in the class with me.

New Year's Day, 1936, in Kharkov had seen the first officially sanctioned Christmas trees for many years. They were set up everywhere—in nurseries, kindergartens, and schools, in the Palace of the Pioneers, in department stores, railroad stations, and city squares. In Pavlovsk Square a figure of Grandfather Frost, taller than a man, had been placed under a huge, brightly lighted tree, where it attracted widespread attention and comment. This was occasioned not only by the novelty of the rehabilitated Grandfather Frost, who for many years had been banished in disgrace from Soviet life, but also by the fact that he was wearing handsome leather mittens and high felt boots. The very first night, however, both the boots and the mittens disappeared; whether they were removed by a disgruntled one-hundred-per-cent Marxist-Leninist or by a freezing ordinary citizen was never made clear!

In the nurseries and kindergartens the preparation for this New Year was strikingly different from that for the 'revolutionary holidays' of previous years. The latter had been colourless and stereotyped: in preliminary meetings of teachers and parents a plan was 'worked out' for conducting the celebration, and official slogans

were repeated. To whip up a revolutionary mood, the 'Internationale' was sung. There was a certain amount of political indoctrination. Then a record of the state loan for industrialisation, socialist reconstruction, etc., was produced, and the failure of parents to subscribe 'voluntarily' and 'enthusiastically' was deplored.

But now, wonder of wonders, there was to be a *Christmas tree*! To be sure—as was emphasised in all the official decrees—it was in no way connected with the religious holiday of Christmas, which remained a 'bourgeois and priestly deception.' The tree was for *New Year's Day*. But this made little difference to the teachers, children, and parents who were busy with the preparations, and preoccupied chiefly with finding something with which to make tree decorations. They improvised with paper, paint, gauze, cotton-wool, gold-leaf, potassium chlorate, and straw, producing lovely bonbonnières, baskets, and cornucopias. Straw was used to make little houses and alternated with bright red holly berries to make strings of 'beads.' Cotton-wool, dipped in starch, was shaped into little apples, pears, cherries, and cucumbers, which were dried, painted, and sprinkled with shiny potassium chlorate.

There was a slight misunderstanding over the use of 'chains' as tree decorations. The teachers, remembering the Christmas trees of their own childhood, had let the children make chains out of coloured paper. But the representatives of the People's Commissariat of Education and the Section of Public Health, who were invited to inspect the Christmas trees in the nurseries and kindergartens, took a dim view of such decorations. 'Chains are synonymous with slavery, a dark reminder of the bygone past. How can there be an emblem of slavery on a Soviet fir tree, on the first joyous socialist fir tree?'

The children were provided with head-dresses and costumes for the New Year's ball—snowflake costumes for the girls, bunny costumes for the boys—made out of starched white gauze and cotton-wool. They also received brightly coloured bags of sweets, nuts, and apples. The festivities were gay and good-natured; home-made confetti was sprinkled in abundance, and even the most 'responsible Party workers' danced the foxtrot and tango (these, together with other 'bourgeois' dances, had recently been rehabilitated for the use of Soviet citizens) with the parents and teachers. Music was furnished by the music teacher at the piano, or, in the absence of a music teacher, by an accordionist or by gramophone records. The New Year celebration was declared a solid success.

VII. Anti-Religious Propaganda at the Pre-school Level

The general anti-religious training of the Soviet school system extended to the level of kindergarten and even nursery. The basic

task of Soviet education, in the words of an official Soviet text, is the training of fighters, builders, and *atheists*. The bourgeois classes, it is alleged, 'strive to conquer the masses of the children, to subject to their influence the consciousness and interests of the children. Hence we must create in the children, from an early age, a definite immunity, arming them with an anti-religious frame of mind.'[1] At the pre-school level, this anti-religious training was directed primarily against religious *holidays*. Christmas and Easter, especially the former, have always been connected in children's minds with emotions of warmth, love, and joy. The struggle was carried on by Komsomol members and members of the League of the Militant Godless, who, on the most solemn religious festivals—Christmas eve, Easter night, Maundy Thursday—paraded in vulgar costumes, prancing, grimacing, and screaming insults at Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, the priests, and the Church.

During the 1920s nursery and kindergarten children were distracted from celebrating Christmas in the traditional way—though it was known that such practices were secretly continued in almost every home—by the organisation of a 'Winter Holiday,' complete with sledging parties. Even this was later criticised as a possible link with Christmas in the children's minds. The campaign against the use of Christmas trees was also waged at the level of economics: 'The destruction of young fir trees is an economic evil. The bureau of young naturalists appeals for a stop to this criminal destruction of our forests. . . .'

Before Easter the children were kept in the nurseries and kindergartens to divert their attention from Easter and focus it on the approaching holiday of May Day. When Easter fell on May 1 one year many nurseries and kindergartens kept the children all week without letting them go home. 'Labour holidays' were organised at both Christmas and Easter time; the children, together with their parents and teachers, shovelled snow, dug flower beds, and repeated such slogans as: 'We do not celebrate bourgeois holidays; we work, like workers.' Even seasonal holidays (autumn and spring festivals, etc.) were criticised in the Soviet press as 'pagan in character.' 'It is necessary to connect everything exclusively with the *revolutionary calendar* or to connect a holiday with achievements in production, with the completion of collective works. . . .'

The oldest kindergarten group (ages six and seven) studied and repeated such slogans as: 'We are workers' children and do not want Christmas trees!' Then they paraded through the streets, carrying placards which read: 'Down with the bourgeoisie and the priests!', 'We do not want Christmas or Christmas trees!'

[1] *Doshkol'noye vospitaniye*, No. 6 (1930), p. 24.

Typical is the story, published in the magazine *Doshkol'noye vospitaniye* [Pre-School Education] for 1926, of a little girl who 'sits quietly on her bed, holding a box of Christmas-tree decorations, and deliberately crushes the little coloured balls and baubles.' And when her father asks her, 'Why are you breaking the pretty toys?' she answers, 'What good are they? I don't need them any longer. We aren't going to have Christmas trees any more. Buy me some skis instead. . . .' The author of the story stresses these last words as evidence of the positive effect of correct anti-religious propaganda.

VIII. Music Training in Soviet Nurseries and Kindergartens

Beginning in 1935–36, when play was finally recognised as the basis of the entire pre-school educational process, the youngest infants were encouraged to begin playing even before they could sit up. The nursing infants slept in attractive white beds in sunny bedrooms, decorated in cheerful tones, with crêpe-de-chine curtains at the windows and flowers and green plants on the shelves and window-sills. Bright celluloid toys—parrots, clowns, rattles, and balls—hung on ribbons beside the beds and in the large 'box' [i.e. a playpen which could accommodate six or eight children] where the children were put during their waking hours. We music teachers worked out a plan for conducting 'music lessons' even in this youngest group. This was done chiefly through the teachers, among whom were some wonderful girls—musical, graceful, with a fine sense of rhythm and excellent voices. The children's songs and dances were based on simple folk melodies. For example, when the nursing infants were lying on their backs or stomachs, trying to raise their heads and bobbing them about, the teacher, in a white smock, approached the 'box,' singing and dancing. She carried a pretty little basket, decorated with ribbons and flowers, in which were rattles and celluloid balls. Taking a rattle in her hand and dancing, she tapped the palm of her other hand with it and sang, to the tune of the Ukrainian folk-song, 'The Ice Cracks, the Water Gushes':

'Rattle, little rattle,
Rattle, ring, little rattle.
So, so, so. . . .
Rattle, ring, little rattle. . . .'

Next she circled around, shaking the rattle over her head. Then she hid it behind her back.

'No, no little rattle,
Where, where is my rattle?'

And then:

'Here, here is my rattle,
I will dance, I will dance with my rattle!'

The teacher danced, circling around the 'box' so that all of the babies could see her. The reaction of the children, even the four-to-six-month-olds, was astonishing. They laughed, raised and turned their heads, and squealed with delight. At eight months the infants were already trying to imitate the teacher's movements. They tapped the rattles against their hands, hid them behind their backs, etc.

Then the children sang, danced, and played with the celluloid balls:

'I throw the balls high, high,
Fly, little balls, far away, far away!'

(to a melody from Tchaikovsky's opera *The Queen of Spades*). This game always thrilled the children. The brightly coloured balls were scattered in the 'box' or around the room, for the children who could already stand and take a few steps. The children collected them, brought them back to the little basket and waited impatiently for the next verse.

Such games developed the children's power of movement, memory, and ear for melody; they later learned to identify the game by the song which accompanied or preceded it.

Children of eighteen months and older were taken in groups to the music room, first being specially dressed in gaily coloured costumes, or furnished with pretty little aprons or coloured ribbons across their chests. The very moment of preparation for the music lesson evoked exclamations and laughter. I remember how at times when I entered a nursery or kindergarten, a child walking in the corridor would catch sight of me and, rushing over to me, jump up to hug me. Then he would run to his group and scream: 'Hey, kids, Nina's here! We're going to sing and dance!' Shouts, laughter, and joyful exclamations rang out. The doors of the other rooms burst open and happy, eager little faces peeped forth. It was a genuine pleasure to be a source of such joy to the children.

But the work of preparation, though always interesting, was difficult and complicated. The workers of the Music Section, which included all the music teachers of the nurseries and kindergartens in the city of Kharkov, met daily to discuss plans for their music lessons. Various teachers proposed new games, songs, or musical accompaniments; 'scenarios' for forthcoming holiday celebrations were prepared. In addition, we were required to visit the music classes of other teachers to gather material and exchange experiences in a friendly way. Sometimes as many as eight or ten music teachers would

sit in on an especially interesting lesson. This was disconcerting to the music teacher as well as to the nursery or kindergarten teachers, but it didn't bother the children in the least. They were so engrossed in their play, they sang, danced, and marched to the music with such enthusiasm, that they didn't care how many 'aunties' were observing them. Besides, the children were mostly show-offs at heart.

The music lessons in the nursery were often centred around a doll or toy—a puppy, kitten, goat, pony, or Mishka the bear (represented either by a stuffed toy or by a teacher in a bear mask). The children entered the hall to march music (the marches were from Mozart or from *Faust* or *Aïda*). They marched around the room and then sat down on little chairs arranged in a semicircle near the piano. In later years these chairs were pretty and colourful, in keeping with the cheerful décor of the music room and the building as a whole. Then the children listened to music connected in some way either with the season of the year or with an approaching holiday or the theme of the current music lesson. For example, in the spring we used Grechaninov's 'Snowflake,' Glinka's 'Skylark,' or Grieg's 'Spring'—saying a few words beforehand about the awakening of nature, the birds, and the blossoming flowers. In the summer we used Grechaninov's 'Thunderstorm,' Glière's 'In the Meadows,' etc. Before the Christmas holiday we played Rebikov's 'Christmas Tree' and excerpts from Tchaikovsky's 'Children's Album.'

If the lesson was based on play with a doll, the children first heard, say, Mozart's or Maikapar's 'Lullaby'; then they sang a song they had already learned which had something to do with babies or sleeping. Sometimes the music teacher or nursery teacher sang them a new song, and the children proceeded to learn it. At the first sign of boredom on the part of any of the children—if one of them yawned or stood up and looked out the window—a new activity was immediately introduced. After the children had heard the 'Lullaby,' it was suggested to the teacher or one of the brighter girls that she be the 'mama' and sing a lullaby to her sleeping doll in a corner of the room. She did this more and more softly until both she and the dolly 'fell asleep.' The other children, leaning on their hands, pretended to sleep too. Then everyone 'woke up.' Sometimes there were birds, or bumble-bees, or beetles—with corresponding music and singing. The children were allowed to dance and run a little (we used Rachmaninov's 'Polka,' Dvořák's 'Slavonic Dance,' or some folk-dance); then they sat down while the teacher brought a little basin, water, and a towel. The doll was washed, its clothes straightened up, and it was seated at a little table with a napkin and place-setting, as if it were eating a meal. Children who were sloppy or untidy at meals were told to practice good table manners with the doll. After

eating, the doll 'went to school' (this was in the six- and seven-year-old kindergarten group). The doll and the children studied together near a blackboard on which were written the first few letters of the alphabet and a few numbers and easy words. After 'school' came a walk, running, games, and dancing. Everything was done to music.

The lessons for the two- and three-year-olds lasted twenty or thirty minutes; those for the younger children were shorter (twelve or fifteen minutes) and simpler. The children were especially fond of such compositions as Raukhverger's 'Little Sun' and 'The Automobile,' Potalovski's 'Little Horse,' and Metlov's songs from the 'Collection for Young Children'; they sang them very well.

The kindergarten children from four to seven years of age had rhythm lessons and did simple gymnastics to music, including exercises with flags (red ones, of course!) and ribbons of silk or paper, depending upon the resources of the kindergarten.

Seeing the joy and laughter in the eyes of the children of this period, we often asked ourselves what had become of all the 'problem children' of the period of 'paedological perversions' and the dismal grey 'pendulums' of the period of War Communism.

The holiday celebrations were often lavishly planned, sometimes to the detriment of more important but less glamorous concerns such as the children's diet. A directress would be allotted funds to cover food, clothing, furniture, toys, and holiday celebrations, but she would often siphon money out of the food budget to buy luxurious furnishing, expensive toys (sometimes so fragile and beautiful that they were promptly put away under glass), and, above all, spectacular holiday decorations. Many a directress spent huge sums on a Christmas tree because she wanted *her* tree to be the fanciest and finest in the whole city. And the tree stood, flooded in gold, sparkling with expensive baubles and electric lights, while the children went without a change of underwear and danced around the tree in torn trousers.

It was even worse when the directress, fawning before the Party leaders of the Section of Public Health or the Section of People's Education, gave banquets for officials with funds intended for the children's holiday celebrations, and loaded the 'chiefs' with gifts taken from the mouths of the children. Such practices were frowned upon by teachers, most of whom were fine, honest girls, devoted to their exacting and difficult work, by instructors in methods, and by music teachers alike.

The holidays, of course, were still officially connected with revolutionary events—the Day of the October Revolution, May Day, Red Army Day, etc. In fact, however, we celebrated the Day of the October Revolution as the 'Holiday of Golden Autumn'. The hall

was decorated with gold and crimson autumn leaves; the teachers made special trips to the park and the forest with the older children to gather leaves, chestnuts, and holly berries. Scattered among the autumn leaves were strings of chestnuts, red cherries, coloured balls, and blue and silver airplanes. In the corner stood an arbour of branches and leaves, serving as a 'den' for Mishka the bear. The children played 'birds flying away' and 'Mishka and the rabbits.' Of course, they sang one or two special October songs, sometimes holding little red flags. And portraits of Stalin and Voroshilov hung on the walls.... But this was secondary. The children's attention was not directed toward the Revolution or its leaders. They sang, danced, played, and were given sweets. Sometimes the Marionette Theatre or the Shadow Theatre came, and they did not present revolutionary plays at all, but 'The Little Round Loaf,' 'The Little Turnip,' 'The Cat, the Rooster, and the Fox'—all on folk themes.

For May Day we prepared a joyous spring holiday, with lots of flowers, and made a Maypole with coloured ribbons. The children dressed as birds and there was only the barest reference to the 'world-wide proletariat.' Red Army Day was the most dignified. Here there were no bunnies or birds. To martial music and songs about horses and pilots the children played fascinating 'war games' with rifles, horses (horses' heads on sticks which the children straddled), and 'Budyonny' hats (named after Cavalry Marshal Budyonny).

In connection with Red Army Day, I remember a nursery teacher of the middle group (eighteen months to two years old) who trained her young charges to identify portraits of Stalin, Voroshilov, Budyonny, and Timoshenko. During a break in the music lesson she held up a magazine picture and asked, 'Who is this?' and the children shouted in chorus, 'Stalin!'—'And this?' 'Voroshilov!'—'And who is this?' Suddenly, before the children had had a chance to answer in chorus a squeaky little voice piped up, 'And this is a little kitten.' There was general bewilderment and then a burst of laughter. All the children quickly shouted, 'Comrade Budyonny!'—Budyonny *did* look rather feline in his stand-out moustaches.

On another occasion, before Red Army Day, one of the directresses of the Kharkov nursery where I worked, a woman with little formal education, decided to order a new and 'luxurious' portrait of Voroshilov. The portrait came out very well and the artist took a good price from her. She bought a large piece of red satin, made something like a huge banner beside the portrait, and asked an instructor to prepare a suitable 'military' slogan as an inscription. Before the Red Army Day celebration began, when the honoured guests from the Section of People's Education had already arrived, the directress, pale and frightened, ran up to me and whispered:

'What are we going to do? We're finished! They'll arrest us all! The Party people have arrived!'—'What's the matter?' I asked.—'Come, read it for yourself.' She dragged me to the ill-fated portrait and pointed to the inscription: 'Glory to the unconquerable Red Army!' 'Heavens,' she exclaimed, 'this means that it does *not* conquer. . . . We must change it immediately to "conquerable." ' Despite all my assurances, the poor woman remained unconvinced. Her holiday was spoiled, and she kept looking at the Party guests in terror and apprehension.

This same directress exhibited her enthusiasm on Trade Union Day one summer by having all the children in her nursery, down to the four-month-old babies, participate in the demonstration. The infants were taken in a truck hired for the purpose; at first they slept quietly, but after a while they woke up and began to whimper, cry and scream. It was a blazing hot day, and the babies all suffered from over-exposure to the sun.

I do not know how Soviet pre-school education might have developed if it had not been interrupted by the war in 1941. But the interruption came. For a year or two previously, militant songs had been heard. Nursery and kindergarten children sang 'If There is War Tomorrow' and 'Ever Higher, Higher, Higher.' With the outbreak of hostilities, an order was given to evacuate all nurseries and kindergartens with all the children and staff, including music teachers, but without the parents. How the Soviet authorities expected to do this remains a mystery to me. Special little cards were issued with evacuation information. They promised to tell where and when, in case of need, the assembly point would be. But no one was ever assembled or evacuated. A few unscrupulous directresses dispersed the nurseries on the sly and 'evacuated' their contents to their own homes. But the majority lost their heads completely and were terrified of the responsibility of directing a children's institution at such a moment. By the end of October 1941 Kharkov was occupied by the Germans. Two weeks earlier the mothers had already practically stopped taking their children to the kindergartens and nurseries. The staff had gradually 'dissolved,' and thus the children's institutions were in fact broken up.

An impression of the last music lesson sticks in my mind. The children were marching with little red flags or rifles, and as they marched they sang:

'If there is war tomorrow,
If tomorrow we take the field. . . .'

THE SOVIET SCHOOL, 1936–1942

by Vladimir D. Samarin

IN this paper I shall attempt to paint an objective picture of Soviet school life, especially the life and work of the Soviet teacher. Particular attention will be paid to the political views of students and teachers, for such matters are of vital importance to an understanding of the Soviet school.

This study is based primarily upon my personal observations: first, as a student (I graduated from a nine-year school in 1930); second, as a teacher (I graduated from the Faculty of Russian Language and Literature of a teachers' college and worked for six years in secondary and technical schools). I have also made use of the observations and experience of my schoolteacher friends, some of whom have now left the Soviet Union. I have used personal notes which I made over a period of several years and was able to preserve. These notes contain facts and observations which would have been difficult to retain in my memory. Finally, I have not failed to use the Soviet and émigré presses. The Soviet press, of course, cannot be considered a reliable source, but one can extract valuable data from it by careful study.

I. Soviet Schools and Students up to 1935

In order to provide a sufficiently clear and complete picture of Soviet schools in the period 1936–42, one must give at least a brief general sketch of what might be called the 'pre-reform' period, that is, prior to the school reforms which the Bolsheviks instituted in the early and middle 1930s.

At that time the Central Committee of the Communist Party published a number of decrees which modified the basis of school instruction. These decrees introduced the 'lesson' [*urok*] as the basic, obligatory form of instruction, established a rigid system of grading, introduced examinations, made the teacher strictly accountable for his work, etc.

These decrees, as it were, turned the educational clock back to pre-revolutionary times. The reforms were thus understood by both teachers and parents; further, they were taken as signifying the failure of the previous educational experiments carried out by the Bolsheviks over a period of fifteen years. (In speaking of a return to the pre-revolutionary school system, of course, I refer only to the *form*, not the *content*, of instruction.)

The earlier experiments had resulted in a catastrophic decline in both the general educational level and in student discipline. Widespread illiteracy and inadequate preparation of students for university work provided the immediate impetus to reform. The reforms may not have been a step forward from the point of view of educational theory, but they played a positive role in the day-to-day life of the schools. In fact, the reforms were demanded by the teachers themselves, for they were well aware of the deplorable situation in the schools. Many of them had opposed the earlier experiments; contrary to Bolshevik directives, for example, they had often conducted traditional lessons instead of laboratory studies. Russian-language teachers gave dictations and tried to make their students more literate. Of course, this resistance could not take the form of open demonstrations: the Bolsheviks cut such attempts short by repressive means. However, there were some overt acts. During these early years (before 1931) many teachers resigned and many more were dismissed.

I graduated from a nine-year school in Orel in 1930, but I started in the fourth grade rather than the first, having studied at home for three years. This was customary in the families of the intelligentsia in those years. Children were tutored at home for three or four years in order to provide them with the minimum essentials of geography, history, and the Russian language. Even after they began attending school, many children continued to study these subjects with private tutors. The reason for this was that subjects like Russian grammar and history were altogether missing from the school curriculum in those years. I remember a conversation with a Russian-language teacher in the school which I attended. This was after I myself had already graduated from a teachers' college. My old teacher (I can mention this now, since he is no longer living) spoke with positive anguish of the way in which Russian language instruction had been conducted during my school years. Teachers were forced to adhere strictly to the directives of the People's Commissariat of Education concerning the brigade, laboratory, and 'complex' (project) methods of instruction; at the same time, they attempted to give their students at least a minimum of acquaintance with their subject, but this was extremely difficult so long as these methods were being used.

History was not taught at all, its place being taken by 'social science,' which was usually taught by a member of the Communist Party. In the school which I attended it was taught by a Party member who had completed a Party school and one year at the Communist Academy. The social science teacher seemed to be the only one in the school who adhered strictly to the brigade method. He would give the class a theme, which was 'worked out' by groups of from six to eight students. The 'working out'—i.e., reading of material in the textbook—was preceded by a brief explanation by the teacher. At best, the material was read over and more or less discussed. Generally, however, the 'working out' consisted in the members of the various groups taking turns telling anecdotes—including anti-Soviet ones. After that, someone with a proclivity for this 'tedious and incomprehensible' subject—social science was so regarded by the students—studied the material and answered examination questions for the whole group. That was the brigade or laboratory method in its pure form, 'according to directive.'

There were virtually no textbooks, except for those in social science and mathematics. The latter was taught chiefly from pre-revolutionary textbooks, in the absence of Soviet replacements. There were no textbooks in the Russian language or the natural sciences. The teacher explained the material and then dictated the rules. Literature was studied from brief, fragmentary notes. Needless to say, the students acquired only a smattering of knowledge.

In contrast to the social science teacher, who adhered strictly to the brigade method, our mathematics teacher—who was also principal of the school—gave traditional lessons. He would explain a theorem, call the students to the board, go over the lesson, and give a homework assignment. The next lesson would begin with a brief quiz. That may be why mathematics was the only subject that the students really knew. The mathematics teacher also recorded grades in a grade-book, something which the other teachers did not do. At the end of the quarter he held a kind of examination—again something which the others omitted. How the social science teacher, for example, 'deduced' the quarterly and annual grades was always a mystery to us students. He did not even ask the students questions. Yet at the end of the quarter he carefully gave each one a 'sat' or an 'unsat' ('satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory'), according to the official grading system of the period. In 1926 another system was introduced: A 'one' indicated superior achievement, a 'two' inferior work. This grading system lasted no more than half a year.

Since studies were conducted by the laboratory method, the school had 'study rooms' or 'laboratories' instead of classes—a mathematics laboratory, physics laboratory, Russian language laboratory,

literature laboratory, etc. The students went from laboratory to laboratory for each new lesson. Usually two groups ('brigades') would work in one laboratory at the same time. This applied to grades five through nine.

The Soviet educational authorities paid great attention to social and political activities, which took up a great deal of the students' time. There were various clubs and voluntary organisations, such as Osoaviakhim[1] and MOPR.[2] 'Wall newspapers' (*stengazety*) were frequently posted; plays and social evenings were arranged. Meetings of the whole student body were held every week. These activities were compulsory, but at this time most students engaged in them enthusiastically and did not have to be forced. Also, the extent of a student's social and political activity was taken into account in promoting him from one grade to the next.

The students' committee (*uchenicheskii komitet*, abbreviated to *uchkom*) played an important role in the life of the school. The chairman of the *uchkom* and even its members attended meetings of the teachers' council, where they could vote, take part in the council's decisions, protest 'unfair' grades, etc.

The school's Komsomol organisation had even greater weight; it also took part in the decisions of the teachers' council, protested 'unfair' grades, and at times even interfered with classroom teaching. At closed Komsomol meetings, various teachers' methods of instruction were subjected to analysis and criticism. Although the students were not severely punished for disciplinary lapses, gross cases of breach of discipline were infrequent. There was a certain sense of responsibility in the school. In general, however, discipline was rather poor. Students very often 'cut' classes, were late, or failed to turn in their homework assignments. In the absence of a strict system of grading, teachers were unable to do much about these deficiencies.

In those years, as well as later, anti-Soviet sentiments were noticeable among the students—including those sentiments which Bolshevik propaganda terms 'survivals of capitalism.' I am thinking primarily of religion. I remember very distinctly that in 1927, 1928, and 1929 the students refused to work at Christmas and Easter. This refusal did not take the form of an overt or stormy demonstration. The students, by mutual agreement, simply failed to come to class. At most, five or ten students appeared. I remember, too, how a group of students in my sixth grade (this was in 1927) intercepted 'strike-

[1] Abbreviation for *Obshchestvo sodeistviya oborone i aviatsionno-khimicheskomu stroitel'stvu* (Society for the Furthering of Defence and Aviation and Chemical Construction).—Ed.

[2] Abbreviation for *Mezhdunarodnaya organizatsiya pomoshchi bortsam revolyutsii* (International Aid Organisation for Revolutionary Fighters).—Ed.

breakers'—those who, despite the agreement, were going to school—several blocks from the school and forced them to return home. These events were a subject of discussion in the teachers' councils, at the students' and Komsomol meetings, and especially at parents' meetings.

I completed secondary school at a time when the 'building of socialism in one country' was getting under way, when the Bolsheviks were mounting their offensive in the villages, when the drive against the 'remnants of the annihilated classes' was being particularly intensified. In the years 1930–34, access to the universities and technical schools was denied to persons who came from such classes, i.e., to children of priests, noblemen, merchants, officers, well-to-do-peasants, etc. At one time an attempt was even made to hinder them in obtaining a secondary education. Thus in 1928 children of these groups were taken from among those who had completed the seventh grade, formed into a separate eighth-grade group in one of the schools in Orel, and required to pay for their schooling. The following year, however, this experiment was dropped.

In 1928 'production specialties' were introduced in the nine-year schools. Starting in the eighth and ninth grades instruction was given in the special subjects which the school's graduates were expected to pursue. Everyone was assigned the same specialty. Thus, in nine-year school No. 5 in Orel, where I studied, we had an egg-and-poultry specialty. The school graduated nothing but 'poultry-breeding technicians.' To be sure, none of the graduates actually went on to work in this field. Some entered engineering schools, others entered the universities; still others established themselves in completely unrelated specialised fields.

In other schools there were specialties in teaching, in secretarial or commercial studies. Rarely did any of the graduates choose the specialty which was foisted upon them. The programme of 'production specialties' was discontinued after about three years.

In November 1929, eighth- and ninth-grade students were taken from their studies and sent into the rural areas on a 'culture campaign' to 'liquidate illiteracy.' Each of these 'soldiers of culture' was assigned twenty or twenty-five illiterate peasants, to whom he had to teach reading and writing for three months. This broadly conceived measure did not yield the expected results. It failed because the 'teachers' were inexperienced and often quite helpless, and because the 'students' sabotaged the studies, regarding them as a measure preparatory to collectivisation. And, in fact, in a number of regions the 'soldiers of culture' were used as agitators to further the process of collectivisation.

It is worth nothing that at this time there was only a small

number of new, young teachers in the schools. Ten years later this situation was completely changed. I shall return to this subject below.

II. Soviet Schools and Students after 1935

At the time when the school reforms of the 1930s were being carried out, I was studying at a teachers' college. I did not return to the schools until after my graduation in 1936. Moreover, I began my teaching career in a technical (agricultural) school rather than in a high school.

The student body of the technical schools was drawn from graduates of seven-year secondary schools who had, in addition, to pass entrance examinations in a number of subjects, including Russian language and literature. As a teacher of this subject I was able to form a fairly accurate estimate of the situation in the schools and, in particular, of the educational level of graduates of the seven-year schools.

To be sure, my students came largely from *rural* seven-year schools, which usually had lower academic standards and produced graduates inferior to those of comparable urban schools. Hence, in applying the following observations to Soviet schools generally, one must make certain adjustments.

The school's entrance examinations, given in mid-August, were not very strict. The section on Russian language and literature included dictation, several questions on grammar, and two or three questions on literature. Students would make anywhere from two to forty mistakes on one dictation, but even those who made as many as ten or fifteen had to be accepted. In 1938 there were 250 candidates for admission, of whom only 120 could be admitted; nevertheless a Komsomol girl who had made forty errors in syntax and spelling was among those accepted. This, of course, was on the insistence of the school's Party organisation, since the girl had Party recommendations.

Students' answers to the questions on Russian literature often revealed a deplorable ignorance of Russian history and an obvious lack of perspective from which to compare pre-Soviet and Soviet conditions. There was also a conspicuous lack of knowledge of the history and present state of the world outside the Soviet Union. Strange as it may seem, at this time even the history of the Soviet Civil War was not studied in Soviet schools.

However, it would be premature to conclude from this that a low level of general education was characteristic of *all* students. Some students, even a few from rural schools, gave evidence of wide reading and an exceptionally high level of development. As a rule,

this high level was attained not so much from school study as from self-education.

As a rule, the children of 'dekulakised' peasants, many of them orphans whose parents had died in exile, made brilliant academic records. This does not mean that certain segments of the Russian population were more gifted than others, even though it is true that the well-to-do peasants were distinguished by great ability and industry. Rather, it was the case that for many years such children were denied admission not only to universities but also to technical schools. In some areas they were even excluded from the senior grades of high school. These children, like others to whom the Bolsheviks denied the opportunity to study, circumvented the obstacles created by the regime by leaving their native districts and entering school under forged identification papers. However, many of them did not succeed in breaking through the barrier of Bolshevik laws.

In October or November, 1934, the Council of People's Commissars removed the restrictions on admission to institutions of higher education for children of 'socially alien' persons. The following year, thousands of these boys and girls entered the universities, institutes, and technical schools. Some of them had been out of secondary school for as many as four years, others had just graduated. This mass of young people, who had enriched their knowledge through self-education and were passionately eager to study, easily passed the competitive examinations. It is only natural that they should have been, in the main, excellent students.

The restriction of educational opportunity is particularly characteristic of the Soviet school system and Soviet society. In addition, certain economic barriers to education have always existed in the USSR. Since 1940, when tuition fees were instituted in the eighth to tenth grades, the economic barriers in the USSR have been just as great as in the 'capitalist' countries. And if one takes into account the low standard of living in the USSR, and the poverty of such segments of the population as the workers and peasants, it can be contended that these barriers are greater in the USSR than in many 'capitalist' countries. It is just as difficult for a needy Soviet family—especially a peasant family—to give its children a higher education as it is for the poorer strata of the most backward Western country—perhaps more difficult.[1]

[1] For the average urban family, with an annual income of about 4,000 roubles, the tuition fee, approximately 200 roubles for the school year, represents an outlay of roughly 5 per cent of total income for each child in grades eight to ten. Peasant income may be estimated at 1,300 to 1,700 roubles annually, so that tuition for each peasant child would amount to more than 12 per cent of this total. (Tuition fees were once more eliminated as of Sept. 1, 1956.)—Ed.

VLADIMIR D. SAMARIN

In 1936, when I began working as an instructor in Russian language and literature, I found that during the six years since my own graduation from the nine-year school, fundamental changes had taken place. At the same time, a great deal remained unchanged.

It was in teaching methods that the sharpest changes had occurred. The laboratory or brigade method had been abolished, having failed to justify itself as an educational technique. (This was the official explanation; I would add that it had harmed a whole generation of school children, both intellectually and morally.[1]) The 'complex' [project] system of instruction had been replaced by the subject system. The standard lesson had been made the sole and mandatory form of instruction. Examinations had been introduced, as had a system of grades, ranging from 'very poor' to 'excellent,' and later a numerical system ranging from 'one' (lowest) to 'five' (highest). Much greater demands than before were now made on the students with respect to discipline as well as academic achievement. Textbooks were widely used, and standard texts began to appear, one after another, in all subjects.

These reforms unquestionably produced positive results. The students' general educational level rose with each passing year, and discipline improved—partly as a result of exhortation and indoctrination, but primarily as a result of strict disciplinary measures. Students who had committed gross breaches of discipline or who had consistently failed to show academic progress were expelled from school, though expulsion was regarded as an extreme measure. In 1939–40, school principals ceased altogether to expel students for breaches of discipline or academic failure, since higher officials laid the entire responsibility for students' offences or unsatisfactory academic progress upon the teachers and principals, accusing them of 'not knowing how to exert influence on the students.'

By about 1940 the ten-year schools (the nine-year system of instruction having been replaced in the 1930s by a ten-year system) were graduating thoroughly literate boys and girls. It cannot be said, however, that there was any great improvement in discipline. The reasons for this are worth exploring. Soon after the basic reforms were

[1] It is worth noting that later Soviet spokesmen were harsher than their predecessors in condemning the 'educational experiments' of the 1920s and early 1930s. For example, Andrei Zhdanov, in a statement to a conference of Soviet musicians and musicologists (January, 1948) admitted that 'innovation is not always the same thing as progress,' and went on to assert that the brigade and laboratory methods 'though very "leftist" in appearance, were actually reactionary and led to the destruction of the Soviet school.' (Q. by Boldyrev, N. I., 'Ob otnoshenii k pedagogicheskomu nasledstvu proshlovo' [Attitude toward the Paedagogical Legacy of the Past], *Sovetskaya pedagogika*, No. 11, 1951, p. 23.) —Ed.

instituted, a law establishing universal seven-year education (*vseobshcheye obucheniye*, abbreviated *vseobuch*) was promulgated. Parents now had to send their children to school,[1] and the teachers had to take measures to get all the children to come. Those children who for various reasons, particularly their families' economic need, had not previously attended school, now joined the others. Some of these children had been working, while others had simply been idle. The new students also included so-called *beznadzornye* ('unsupervised ones'), orphans or 'semi-orphans' who had lost one parent.[2] The forcible expansion of the student body also brought street urchins into the schools, and they immediately began undermining school discipline, 'cutting' classes, and generally misbehaving. They were truly the scourge of the teachers and the school administration.

The second cause of the decline in discipline was the wave of mass arrests which swept through the country in 1937. Many families were left without fathers and economically shaken; many children had to leave school. In the schools, anti-Bolshevik sentiment increased; children sometimes voiced their protest against the regime by violating school discipline.

A third factor in the decline of discipline was the introduction of tuition fees, which aroused a certain amount of resentment among the students. Academically, however, this change had positive results: students began to do better in their studies, since those who received a grade of 'excellent' were not required to pay tuition fees. Also, as in the universities, excellent work entitled students to scholarship aid.

These various changes enhanced the role of the teacher and increased his responsibility. I shall say more about this presently. Here I shall merely mention one matter directly concerning the students. The teacher came to enjoy the great esteem and affection of his students. As before, of course, some teachers were liked and some were not; the students gave the latter derogatory nicknames, caused them trouble, etc. However, teachers as such unquestionably began to command greater respect. The better a teacher knew his subject the more interesting his classes were, the greater was his students' respect for him. The teacher rose in the students' eyes both as an intellectual authority, a source of knowledge, and as a mentor, an elder comrade, a moral authority.

The importance of social and political activities in school life

[1] There were certain exceptions. For example, in rural areas seven-year schooling is not strictly compulsory even to the present day.—Ed.

[2] The *beznadzornye* also included many children who were 'unsupervised' because both of their parents were working, or simply because their parents failed to take care of them.—Ed.

declined sharply. As before, the students' committee held meetings, and Osoaviakhim and MOPR continued to exist; but the grading and promotion of students were now based exclusively on their scholastic standing. The student committees, now as before, sent their representatives to meetings of the teachers' councils, but the representatives did not have the decisive voice they had once had.

The role of the Komsomol, however, increased slightly. Although it could not intervene effectively in decisions to promote or fail students, it actively continued to search for political motives for teachers' actions when it considered them 'un-Bolshevik.' Such actions were discussed, and the teachers' work and paedagogical approach were criticised at closed Komsomol meetings. Their every utterance was scanned for anything that was 'un-Soviet' or 'out of tune with the era,' as the saying went. The Komsomol unit could use the Party line to bait a teacher of whom it did not approve. This was particularly true during the years of the '*yezhovshchina.*'[1]

In general the interests of Russian students are considerably wider and deeper than those of Western students. (When I say 'Western,' I am thinking primarily of the German schools, with which I am fairly familiar.) In making this comparison, I do not mean to criticise any particular educational system. School systems are the concern of individual nations. Rather, I mean to compare the breadth of interest of individual Russian students with that of Western students. I wish also to make it clear that the Bolshevik regime is not to be given credit for this difference. It is not *because of* the regime, but *in spite of* it, that Russian young people have acquired whatever positive qualities they possess. Active curiosity, an inquiring spirit, a yearning for broad and deep knowledge, a fascination with questions of philosophy, history, and literature—these have always been characteristic of Russian youth. Our young people have always received, as it were, a dual education: one in school, in the classroom, the other in the libraries, museums, and theatres, and in study at home. Among Russians the term 'self-education' has a particularly broad and deep meaning.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, under Bolshevik influence, part of the youth became absorbed in social and political activity, to the detriment of their general knowledge and academic achievement. But, starting in the mid-1930s, there was a sharp decline of interest in social and political activity. Attention shifted to scholarship, to study, to activity in various 'circles' devoted to literature, history, science, etc.—and to self-education. Interest in books increased—chiefly classical literature, both Russian and Western.

[1] The period of bloody purges in the late 1930s (named for N. I. Yezhov, head of the NKVD at the time).—Ed.

There was also an increased interest in the theatre, especially the classics. Whereas in the late 1920s and early 1930s students were primarily interested in technical subjects, in the period before the war their interest shifted to the humanities.

It is extremely difficult to discuss the political views of Russian young people, and discussing them imposes a grave responsibility. However, I regard this as one of the basic questions to be explored in any attempt to describe Soviet schools. Just what, in the final analysis, have the Bolsheviks achieved? Have they achieved the results they sought? Do Soviet schools really rear citizens who are devoted to the cause of Lenin and Stalin? These questions have to be answered. But we must reject the extreme statements: 'Yes, Russian schools rear convinced Communists,' and, on the other side, 'No, Russian youth is wholly anti-Communist.' The question is too complex for that. The only brief answer we can give is this: No, the Bolsheviks have not achieved the results which they strove for and counted upon; our youth, like our entire nation, has refused to submit to the Bolsheviks. It has not been broken; it has not permitted itself to be turned into an obedient instrument of Bolshevik policy.

The heroes of A. Fadeyev's novel *Molodaya gvardiya* [The Young Guard], Oleg Koshevoi and his comrades, who were products of Soviet schools, perished in the struggle against the Germans. They organised an underground movement which fought side by side with convinced Bolsheviks, defending the Bolshevik regime. That is true. But the real moving force in this struggle was definitely not Soviet loyalty; it was Russian patriotism, love for the Motherland. In the vow given by the underground soldiers of Krasnodon, like those of other cities, there was not a word about Bolshevism or Stalin—only about the Motherland. The tragedy of Russian youth, however, is that in defending Russia it also defended Bolshevism. For it is a fact that, throughout the 1930s, anti-Bolshevik sentiment was growing and spreading among Soviet young people. This resulted, first, from the growth of anti-Bolshevik sentiment among the people generally, and, second, from the specific disillusionment of the nation's youth.

In the late 1920s many young people were carried away by the prospects of the developing industrialisation of the country, were gripped—there is no need to conceal the fact—by a passionate spirit of construction, a sense of building something new; by the late 1930s, however, very little remained of this spirit. Instead of the broad vistas painted by the Bolsheviks, young men and women saw nothing ahead but—at the very best—graduation from a university or technical school and a career in the border areas of the country

or in some remote village. Aware of these feelings, the Bolsheviks began to talk a great deal about duty to the nation and country, which, they contended, consisted in precisely that sort of ordinary, unglamorous work.

In literature the 'positive hero' made his appearance—the student who was finishing the university or technical school and dreaming of his future work as an agronomist in a Cossack village in the Kuban or as a forester in the Siberian vastness. I remember, for example, one of Ye. Kriger's sketches in *Izvestiya* about a little bookkeeper in some kolkhoz in Vologda Province who finally understood the significance of what he was doing. Naturally, these petty activities could not captivate young people, before whom only recently broad vistas had been unrolled—Communist vistas perhaps, but nevertheless vistas whose seeming grandeur and nobility of aim were alluring. The enthusiastic spirit of those distant days also included a kind of internationalism that was not merely destructive: 'We study and work not only for ourselves but for all humanity.'

Disillusionment with Communist ideas had set in long before the Bolsheviks shifted the major stress of their propaganda to patriotism. Soviet leaders hastened to exploit Soviet patriotism to fill the breach which had formed in the consciousness of Russian young people as a result of the collapse of Communist ideas. The first crushing, truly crushing blow to Communist ideas, to the enthusiasm of the youth for 'building communism,' was dealt by collectivisation. The second, final blow was the *yezhovshchina.*

In the spring of 1940, giving a lecture in an agricultural school where I taught, I quoted Belinski's words, written in 1840, to the effect that he envied the generations to come who would see the splendid and flourishing Russia of 1940.[1] When I had finished reading this passage, there was a sudden burst of laughter from the audience. I acted as though nothing had happened—but that is not the point. What was most important was the reaction of the students, a reaction which for most of them was completely instinctive. This was not an organised demonstration. Rather, the students laughed in spite of themselves, so absurd did they find the words of the great literary critic who had envied them—they who had seen the devastation of the countryside under collectivisation and the famine that followed collectivisation, who saw all about them poverty and arbitrary authority. 'Envied!' burst from one of the students, and I

[1] The quotation from Belinski, which appears in his *Sochineniya*, Vol. 12 (1926), p. 224, reads as follows: 'We envy our grandchildren and great-grandchildren who are destined to see Russia in 1940, standing at the head of the cultured world, establishing laws for science and art, and receiving a reverent tribute of respect from the whole of enlightened mankind.'—Ed.

still remember the sarcasm that blazed from his intelligent eyes. This seems to me a vivid and convincing illustration of the fact that Russian young people understood what was going on around them and realised where the Bolsheviks were leading the country and the people.

Here is another example. A teacher from Simferopol told me that in the ninth grade of one of the city's secondary schools there was not a single Komsomol member. Despite the efforts of the school's Komsomol unit (which was, incidentally, very small) to recruit ninth-grade students, it had no success. The students, pleading heavy classroom and home work, avoided applying for membership. At the same time they were careful not to act in a defiant manner, realising that to do so might be dangerous.

One should not conclude, of course, on the basis of these facts that *all* Russian young people were and are anti-Bolshevik. A certain number, especially those in the Komsomol '*aktiv*,' and certain non-Party people, continue to support the Bolsheviks. It would be very difficult to give any figures for this group. We can only say that it is a small, though significant, segment of the youth.

A certain number of young people take an active part in the life of the country, even though this means helping to 'build socialism,' simply because of their natural and ineradicable urge to create, to apply their efforts in an endeavour which will yield visible results. They can see the factories which they are building, the hospitals whose blueprints they are drafting. It requires a great effort of will to realise that behind all this stands the dark spectre of Bolshevism, whose aims are contrary to the interests of the people. Yet, people see this spectre more and more clearly; anti-Bolshevik sentiment is growing and deepening both in the population as a whole and among the youth. The young people themselves, seeing the discrepancy between propaganda and reality, are successfully resisting the Bolsheviks' effort to subjugate the rising generation. The teachers have greatly aided them in their resistance.

III. The Training of School Teachers

Up to the mid-1930s, Soviet universities, institutes and academies accepted students *without examinations*, requiring only a secondary-school diploma. The quality of secondary-school graduates, however, is clear from the preceding portions of this study. Most of them were semiliterate. At the university level it is too late to teach Russian grammar, so, quite understandably, the universities, too, graduated semiliterates.

Secondary-school teachers were trained in the universities and in special teachers' colleges. A university graduate is considered qualified

to teach the primary academic discipline of the faculty in which he has studied; for example, a graduate of a faculty of physics and mathematics can teach physics and mathematics, a graduate of a faculty of chemistry and biology can teach chemistry, etc. In the early 1930s, new teachers' colleges were opened in a number of provincial cities: Orel, Kursk, Voronezh, Smolensk, and others. I graduated from Orel Teachers' College, which was founded in 1931.

The provincial teachers' colleges were modelled after those in Moscow and Leningrad. In large part, of course, the educational organisation depended on the particular teaching staff. The staffs were by no means uniform. In provincial towns located far from metropolitan centres and older university towns lectures were delivered by young instructors and even by ordinary secondary-school teachers. There were not enough professors for all the newly founded colleges, and in those where ordinary teachers, however experienced, gave the lectures the level of instruction was generally unsatisfactory.

Teachers' colleges located in cities near the metropolitan centres, or near old university towns where ample professorial personnel were available, were in a completely different position. The professors from the established universities came to the new schools several times a year for two or three weeks and gave lecture courses. This was the case, for example, in Orel. The course in Western literature in the Faculty of Russian Language and Literature was given by a noted authority on Western literature, Professor S. Utyovski of Kharkov University. In the Mathematics Faculty, Professor Ogorodnikov of Moscow University delivered lectures. Our course in Russian literature was given by the elderly Professor A. N. Putintsev, a man well known in scholarly circles, who died before the war. Professor Putintsev came to Orel, strangely enough, as an exile. He had been exiled first from Leningrad to Voronezh and then from Voronezh to Orel. The students used to say in malicious jest: 'Just think, if it weren't for the vigilance of the valiant NKVD, we would never have heard the lectures of this famous professor. . . . Thank you, NKVD.' Professor Putintsev enjoyed the students' highest esteem and affection. His scholarship, his treatment of literary works —which was often far from Marxist—was always impressive and instructive. Naturally, it was painful for a scholar like Putintsev to have to deal with students who did not know even the simple rules of Russian grammar.

When I entered Orel Teachers' College in 1932 there were no examinations. Some forty students were admitted to the faculty of literature. The first graduating class, in 1936, consisted of fourteen

students. The rest, to use the official term, had been 'weeded out' by the examination required for promotion from the second to the third course. I remember a number of such students. Student B. had graduated from a *rabfak*.[1] His writing was absolutely illiterate, though he read a great deal and knew and loved literature. Student K. had completed eight grades of a nine-year school. He made innumerable errors in spelling and grammar. Student L. had completed only five grades, and had then taken some special courses. His writing was atrocious, and he was incapable of expressing a thought coherently. These three students hung on with great difficulty until the middle of the second course and then left.

Student L. said that he couldn't study at all since he was unable to understand anything in the textbooks or lectures. And yet, after leaving the teachers' college, he received the post of Inspector of the Kursk Provincial Board of Education for the 'liquidation of illiteracy.' Two years later, I met him in the Zhukov district of Orel Province. He was principal of a secondary school and was even teaching Russian language and literature to sixth graders. What he actually taught them I do not know. Needless to say, he was a Party member and had been an active Komsomol worker before entering the college; he owed his position entirely to Party influence.

Student B. also went on to teach literature at a *rabfak*. Student K., a non-Party man, showed greater modesty; he found a job as a 'scholarly worker' in the Turgenev Museum in Orel.

These examples, however, should not give the reader the impression that all of the students were semiliterate. Some students who entered the teachers' college had successfully completed nine-year schools. Others were older, experienced primary-school teachers who had not previously received a higher education. And it should be added that the fourteen students who *did* graduate from the college became fairly good teachers.

I graduated from teachers' college at a time when new demands, stemming from the educational reforms of the mid-1930s, were being made on both students and professors. These new, more stringent demands were the reason why, of the forty students who had entered the course, only fourteen finally graduated. Whereas previously there had been no examinations but only quizzes, starting in the mid-1930s strict examinations were introduced. With each year the demands on the students increased. During 1934, 1935, and 1936, the students in all courses in the Faculty of Literature had to do several dictations, and those whose grammar was unsatisfactory were not

[1] Abbreviation for *rabochii fakul'tet* (literally, 'workers' faculty,' i.e., special courses intended to prepare uneducated workers for entrance into higher educational institutions).—Ed.

promoted to the next course. The 1936 graduating class was the first to consist of teachers who knew their subjects and were fully literate.

The demands on the students in teachers' colleges, as in the universities and technical schools, continued to increase, and by 1941 the colleges were graduating adequately qualified teachers. As before, however, there were various brief courses whose graduates were by no means qualified—for example, the courses which trained teachers for primary schools and incomplete secondary schools. After the introduction of universal compulsory seven-year education a great many new schools were opened—and, as before, there was a shortage of teachers. The newly opened teachers' colleges did not graduate their first classes until 1935–36. Therefore the brief courses, which turned out poorly qualified teachers, continued to be given.

As I have already indicated, before 1935 Soviet universities did not accept the children of so-called 'socially alien elements'—former officers, merchants, and tradesmen, important Tsarist officials, clergymen, nobles, 'honorary citizens,'[1] Tsarist police and law officers, 'dekulakised' peasants, etc. One can readily imagine what an enormous number of Russian young people were included in these categories. Even the children of white-collar workers and members of the intelligentsia were given second priority, first priority going to the children of workers and peasants. As we have seen, however, many children of the 'socially alien elements' overcame the barriers set up by the regime—moving away from their home towns, putting in several years of heavy physical labour in order to obtain workers' papers, and then entering universities, often with forged documents.

Often they were 'exposed' and expelled, whereupon they went off to another part of the country and entered another school. The secret police apparatus, which had the job of 'clearing' those who entered the universities, could not cope with the task of checking millions of persons. This apparatus, which is customarily spoken of as the most powerful and efficient cog in the Bolshevik state machinery, often functioned in a far from efficient manner.

The bitterly anti-Soviet views of this group of students were, needless to say, reflected in the views of the whole body of Russian students.

[1] The rank of 'honorary citizen' (*pochotnyi grazhdanin*) was created in 1832; such citizens were supposed to occupy an intermediate social position between the nobility and the common people. This rank was conferred, under specified conditions, upon merchants, scientists, artists, university graduates (of whom there were very few at the time), government employees of the lower echelons, children of the clergy, etc. (Cf. Michael T. Florinsky, *Russia: A History and an Interpretation*, New York, 1953, p. 786.)—Ed.

I myself was refused admission because my grandfather had been dean of a theological seminary and editor of a large newspaper. After my attempts to enter Moscow and Leningrad universities ended in failure, I decided to conceal my past. For two years I worked as an ordinary factory labourer, and in the autumn of 1932 applied for admission to Orel Teachers' College, writing 'worker' in the social-origin column of the questionnaires. I was accepted, and only after I had completed the third course was I expelled for 'concealing social status.' Half a year later I again entered a teachers' college and graduated from it. My fundamental error had been to enter a college in my native city, where I was well known. And yet, despite that, I studied for three years before being 'exposed.'

Other cases ended less happily. Late in 1934, Ivanova, a student in the third course of the Faculty of Chemistry and Biology, went to the chemistry laboratory and took poison after being informed of her expulsion for 'concealing social origin.' The doctors were unable to save her. For several days afterward, no laughter was heard in the school corridors. In conversation among themselves the students openly charged the regime with responsibility for her death. The college's Party organisation met twice in closed sessions at which representatives of the NKVD were present. Cases of this sort could not but influence the students' political views, serving to intensify their hostility toward Bolshevism.

The students' attitudes were reflected in their whole intellectual and cultural life. Such academic disciplines as Leninism or the history of the Party never aroused the slightest interest; the study of those subjects was regarded as an onerous, unpleasant duty. Students studied only enough to pass the examinations. Only a few students went to the study circles in political subjects like Leninism, while literary debates attracted hundreds of students not only from the Faculty of Literature but from other faculties as well.

Interest in literature ran very high among the students; they all read a great deal, following not only contemporary Soviet literature but also contemporary Western literature—naturally, within the limits set by Soviet publishing houses. They read Dreiser, Sinclair, Hemingway, and Feuchtwanger, and they read and loved Russian and Western classical literature.

The theatre and opera always aroused great interest. Cities which had no good theatres of their own were visited by touring theatrical companies from Moscow and Leningrad, and students always flocked to their performances. As before the Revolution, students showed a lively interest in literature and art. But, in contrast to pre-Revolutionary students, Soviet students had little interest in public affairs. Whereas before the Revolution students were in the

centre of public life, today they show no zest whatever in carrying out their so-called 'social obligations.' Social and political activity aroused interest chiefly among members of the Komsomol '*aktiv*.'

Many students were interested in sports—in the summer, volleyball, football [i.e., soccer], track; in the winter, skiing, skating, hockey. However, this interest did not take the form it does in the West. Sports were a part of the students' life, but were not allowed to interfere with their other interests.

The students' political views cannot be defined simply as 'anti-Soviet' or 'pro-Soviet', since alongside the anti-Soviet views, which embraced large numbers of the students, there also existed feelings of complete neutrality. As many students put it, 'We are concerned with science, not with politics.' These students buried themselves in science in order to hide from Soviet reality, from the Bolshevik politics which was imposed upon them. For it cannot be denied that a certain part of Russian youth supported the Bolsheviks, seeing no other path to follow, seeing nothing that could replace Bolshevism, that seemed more progressive.

A revulsion against capitalism as a socio-economic system was and is noticeable among the youth. The students, like the rest of the population, had no opportunity to become more closely acquainted with the political systems of the democratic countries. Soviet propaganda, too, fostered this revulsion against capitalism. All the while, however, the process of disillusionment with the Bolshevik regime went on uninterruptedly; anti-Soviet sentiment increased, and more and more foes of Bolshevism appeared among Russian youth.

IV. The Teacher in the School

I have already mentioned the case of a semiliterate man who became principal of a secondary school and even taught the Russian language. This case was not exceptional. In one of the secondary schools in Voronezh, where I had occasion to work, the geography teacher (in 1940) was a woman named Yekimova who had completed a short-term course for geography teachers in incomplete secondary schools. As educational director of the school, I visited some of her classes. Here is what I heard in the very first lesson, in the fifth grade: 'Well, children,' Yekimova began, 'today we'll discuss the subject: the Arctic Ocean. Now, seaweed grows on the shores of the Arctic Ocean; polar bears, walruses, and other beasts live in the seaweed.'

The rest of the lesson was on about the same level, although she tried to follow the textbook, which lay open before her on the table. Whenever she lifted her eyes from the book, seaweed and walruses

popped into her exposition. It was only with great difficulty that I was able to sit through the lesson; I wanted very much to throw her out of the classroom. Analysing the lesson with her at the end of the class, I tried to convince her that polar bears do not live in seaweed. But all to no avail.

'You're just finding fault with me, Comrade *zavuch*,'[1] she complained. 'I'm teaching according to the textbook. It's all written down there. Anyway, I think I'll go to the *gorkom*.'[2]

At the second lesson, Yekimova made a new discovery. 'Children,' she announced, 'you and I are living in Western Europe.'

The principal of the school, when I spoke to her about Yekimova, did not show any great astonishment, much less indignation. When I suggested that Yekimova be dismissed immediately, she replied:

'No, that's impossible. Yekimova is a young teacher. She needs to be helped. That's your responsibility.'

I declared that I disclaimed responsibility for geography instruction in the fifth grade and was reporting to the city board of education about Yekimova's teaching. The principal then visited several of Yekimova's classes herself. It was quite some time before we succeeded in dismissing Yekimova. The *gorkom* stubbornly defended her (Yekimova was a candidate for Party membership). Finally, as a result of prolonged negotiations, she was transferred to another school.

Although the Yekimova case was not exceptional, one should not conclude from this that all young teachers were equally unqualified. I met many well-educated young teachers, of whom the older teachers spoke in the highest terms. Whereas in the early 1930s a new, young teacher encountered a prejudiced attitude on the part of the older teachers, as well as the students' parents and the students themselves, by the late 1930s many young teachers began to enjoy deserved authority. The older teachers, who had accumulated teaching experience and a large store of knowledge in the pre-Revolutionary universities, did not treat the young teachers with the professional prejudice of 'old hands.' Their attitude was determined by the conduct and the knowledge of the young teacher himself. If the latter showed a mastery of his subject and a love of his work, he soon gained the respect and affection of his older colleagues. If he did not know his subject or love his work, he could not count on their respect. And if a young teacher, still lacking experience but sincerely anxious to acquire it, turned for advice and help to an older teacher,

[1] Abbreviation for *zavedyvayushchii uchebnoi chast'yu* (educational director).—Ed.

[2] Abbreviation for *gorodskoi komitet* (town committee [of the Communist Party]).—Ed.

he was never refused. In all the years that I spent in Soviet schools, I never saw any sign of antagonism between the older and younger teachers. The latter, for their part, treated their older colleagues with great respect—and the greater the older teachers' experience and qualifications, the greater the respect they enjoyed. Nor were the two groups divided by their political views. Devoted Bolsheviks were to be found in both, but the majority were unsympathetic to the regime.

I have already discussed the relations between teachers and students. These relations (I am speaking of the last few years before the war) were much like those that existed before the Revolution—in both the negative and the positive sense.

I know of cases in which students displayed a truly touching attitude toward their teacher—cases which attested to the existence of some sort of personal rapport between teacher and students. In characterising the students' political views, I have already mentioned the spontaneous laughter which greeted my quotation of Belinski's remarks about Russia in 1940. This was, after all, a 'collective anti-Bolshevik act,' which the teacher and students should supposedly have reported to the proper authorities. But, by tacit agreement, neither the teacher nor the students—and there were some forty in the class!—said a word to anyone. I checked and learned that my students had said nothing even to their friends in other courses.

Here is another example. In 1940, in one of the secondary schools in Voronezh, a group of students failed to appear for the May Day demonstration. The class leader [teacher] responsible for the class to which the group belonged was called on the carpet by the school principal, who threatened him with serious consequences. When the students who had been absent from the demonstration learned of this, they went to the principal to defend their class leader and took all the blame upon themselves. They also went to the class leader and asked his pardon.

After the introduction of universal seven-year education, the class leader—and almost every teacher was a class leader—was obliged, in the official Soviet parlance, to ensure the students' one-hundred-per-cent attendance. Class leaders visited the homes of students who stayed away from school and remonstrated with their parents, devoting a great deal of time and effort to this task. If the students returned to school, it was mainly because the teacher told their parents or the students themselves how difficult it was for him to make the rounds of the truants' homes and what unpleasant consequences he personally might suffer as a result of the failure of his students to attend class.

The students realised what a burden of social and political obligations the teacher carried—in addition to his regular duties—

and they sought, often without being fully aware of it themselves, to ease his task. Not all students did so, of course, and their help did not take an organised form; but the teacher met with an understanding of his burdensome duties among the students, especially those in the upper grades.

In addition to his regular work, including class teaching, preparation for classes, and special teachers' conferences, a teacher had to take part in conferences on teaching methods and industrial production, which were held almost every week. He had to direct a club—the mathematics teacher a mathematics club, the literature teacher a literary club, etc. He had to attend trade-union meetings and assume some part of the work. He had to participate in the work of one of the Soviet Union's 'voluntarily-compulsory' organisations, such as MOPR or Osoaviakhim. He had to attend general students' meetings. Finally, most teachers had the burdensome duties of serving as class leaders.

The demands of 'socialist competition' imposed a heavy burden on the teacher—lowering his morale and wasting his time. He had to conclude with one or several other teachers a so-called 'socialist contract,' which prescribed the progress to be achieved by the students in terms of percentages. The teacher was held responsible for his students' progress. If he did not achieve the required percentage of passing students, the standard accusations were made: he did not work enough with the students and the parents; he did not carry on supplementary studies; he did not study the *Short Course on the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)*.

Not all teachers had the courage to rate students according to their actual knowledge. Some compromised with their consciences and artificially raised the percentage of passing students by giving higher grades than the students deserved. Thus the official figures on academic achievement by no means reflected the actual progress achieved.

Here is a description of a teacher's working day, a slightly edited report by a teacher acquaintance of mine, which conveys vividly and accurately the atmosphere in which Soviet teachers worked:

> The day before yesterday I didn't get home until two o'clock in the morning. There had been a conference on teaching methods. I sat down to grade some papers but found that I couldn't work. My head was simply splitting. The next morning, I would have given anything not to get up. But there was a full day ahead of me—classes, a meeting of the *mestkom*,[1] a section meeting of mathematics teachers.

[1] Abbreviation for *mestnyi komitet professional'novo soyuza* (local trade-union committee).—Ed.

The first thing I heard when I got to school yesterday was the voice of our science teacher, Petrova (you know her, don't you? she's our Party organiser):

'Comrade Krylov, you are on duty today.'

'I didn't know.'

'You *should* know, Comrade Krylov.'

'May I ask what business it is of yours!'

'What business, Comrade Krylov? Does Party leadership mean nothing to you?' The very sound of her voice always makes me frantic.

I went into the common-room, where I ran into the principal.

'Vasili Ivanovich, you have been neglecting the training of your students again. The inkwells in your classroom have disappeared. You must hold more class meetings.'

I had to go to the classroom and find out who had taken the inkwells. It turned out that they had not disappeared after all: The *zavkhoz*[1] of the school had taken them, for some reason of his own. What, I ask you, did this have to do with training the students?

Classes started. My first class was 7A. I began to ask questions on the previous lesson, only to be told that the students hadn't studied anything. I asked why not.

'There was a meeting of the students' committee.'

'Surely you weren't all at the meeting?'

'Yes. 7B challenged our class to a socialist competition.'

The principal visited my third class. Do you know him? He's a character. But then, yours is no better. . . .

After class he said to me:

'The lesson was correctly organised as regards methods, but one did not feel a link with the contemporary world; you omitted the elements of internationalist education.'

'May I remind you,' I replied, 'that I was explaining the rule for dividing a polynomial by a monomial. Now how can that be linked up . . .'

'Comrade Krylov,' he broke in, at once adopting an official tone, 'what have monomials and polynomials got to do with it? You are working in a Soviet school.'

Well, what could I say? I told him that I would 'take my errors into consideration and link up my teaching with the contemporary world.' After classes were over, there was a meeting of the *mestkom*.

[1] Abbreviation for *zavedyvayushchii khozyaistvom*, literally 'economic director.' The *zavkhoz*, counterpart of the *zavuch* (educational director), is concerned with school maintenance and supply. Both directors are subordinate to the school principal.—Ed.

We sat there for two whole hours, though the questions on the agenda could have been settled in fifteen minutes: creating a commission for the conclusion of 'socialist contracts,' the subscription drive for the state loan, whether to make a twenty-five rouble loan to the school charwoman. As usual, the chairman of the *mestkom* did more talking than anyone else—particularly on the last question. The committee's decision on this was negative; it was decided:

'To reject A. K. Gapeyeva's request in view of the *mestkom*'s lack of funds.'

I did not get home until seven in the evening. And by eight I had to be at a section meeting of mathematics teachers. Thanks to a teacher from School 66, who delivered an interesting report, I was able to recover from the *mestkom* meeting. But again there was no time left to grade those papers. . . .

This is what a teacher's working day was like. It is difficult to say what proportion of a teacher's time and energy was spent on work which had no relation to his actual teaching duties. In any case, it was the greater part.

One item in the above account deserves particular attention. The principal of the school, after visiting the class, remarked that the teacher had not linked up his subject with the contemporary world. The principal was a member of the Communist Party. At one time he had taught 'social science'; then he had left school to undertake some other Party work, but had later returned. He was somewhat inferior to the general run of school principals at that time, but a number of his traits were typical of Soviet principals, most of whom were Party members. He had received a directive on the necessity of linking up school instruction with the contemporary world, and he was strictly following this directive, even demanding that monomials and polynomials be linked up with contemporary problems. His fellow principals, superior in education and intellectual development, also repeated the same words about linking up the teaching of every subject with the contemporary world; but they realised the difficulty of linking up monomials and polynomials with current events, Soviet reality, dialectical materialism, and the *Short Course on the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)*, and stopped short of demanding this of their teachers. They repeated the standard phrases the way a sorcerer delivers his incantation. There was an element of self-insurance in the occasional utterance of these phrases, and that is how they were regarded by the teachers, too. They too would declare that it was necessary to link things up with the contemporary world, that they were doing so and would continue to do so. . . .

Teachers often could—and did—successfully refrain from linking their subject with the *Short Course.* Take a rule of Russian grammar, such as the use of a dash between the subject and predicate if the subject is a noun in the nominative case and there is no copulative verb. There are several ways in which one might illustrate this rule, e.g.:

'*Stalin—vozhd' mirovovo proletariata*' ('Stalin is the leader of the world proletariat'), or

'*Zhuravli—ptitsy perelyotnye*' ('Cranes are migratory birds').

Only if some outsider were visiting the class, checking on the teacher's work, would the teacher write the first sentence on the board. If he were alone with the students, he would never do so. It was simply not possible psychologically.

Soviet teachers have very little time to themselves, but they do have some. Their struggle for free time was a part of the general struggle against the regime. The impossible burden of work, which required the teacher, like every Soviet citizen, to devote himself entirely to furthering the cause of Bolshevism, served, among other things, to deprive him of free time. The individual is supposed to spend as little time as possible alone or with close friends; he should have no time at all for reflection, which is sure to lead a Soviet citizen to conclusions inimical to the interests of the regime. Hence the struggle which every Soviet citizen wages for time of his own must be regarded as a struggle against the regime.

Perhaps no one in the USSR carries on so strenuous a battle for free time as does the teacher. He is helped a great deal by his vacations—summer, winter, and spring. However, the Communists lay hands even upon these. The spring and winter vacations virtually do not exist; everything possible is done, through various meetings and conferences, to deprive the teacher of his leisure time. It is more difficult to take away the summer vacation, but the Communists are in large part successful here, too.

Soviet teachers often spend their vacations travelling throughout Russia—to the Caucasus, the Crimea, Siberia, along the Volga. A trip is relatively inexpensive, and there are 'teachers' clubs' and tourist camps everywhere. Most teachers are fond of the theatre and, insofar as their time permits, try to keep up with literature, art exhibitions, and concerts. They escape from Soviet reality into literature, art, and nature. Most of them have no interest at all in officially-promoted, social activity; indeed, they hate it more than do other Soviet citizens.

However, the political views of Soviet teachers, like those of Soviet students, cannot be categorically described as anti-Soviet. Among teachers, as among other strata of the Soviet population, there are people who are devoted to Bolshevism, or rather bound to

it either ideologically, or, more frequently, as a matter of practical politics. This is true above all of Party members. 'If Bolshevism collapses, what will we do?'—this is the key to many Bolsheviks' devotion to the cause.

The percentage of 'ideological' Bolsheviks is very small. I myself encountered almost none among teachers. On the other hand, I can cite a number of instances in which anti-Bolshevik sentiment was displayed. I am not speaking now of my friends, with whom I talked with complete frankness, but of the broad anti-Bolshevik sentiment among Soviet teachers as a group.

In August, 1938, having fled from arrest the previous December, I arrived in Voronezh. From there, on the recommendation of friends, I went to one of the districts of Voronezh Province as an instructor in the Russian language and literature in a local agricultural college. About a month after my arrival, one of the teachers—a history instructor, a Party member and the college's Party organiser—came up to me and said, 'Vladimir Dmitrievich, we have a bookkeeper named M. here. Well,'—and he hesitated slightly—'be careful with him. Talk mostly about clouds, nightingales in lilac bushes. . . . Do you follow me?'

Naturally, I understood at once: The college's bookkeeper was an informer for the local district section of the NKVD.

About a year after I arrived, when I had learned to know all of my colleagues better, I was with two of them in whose company I often spent my off-duty hours, when I burst out:

'Within five years, we'll settle scores with them!'

We had been talking about the secretary of the Party district committee, who had made an inspection visit to the college and had spoken very roughly to one of the teachers, an old man. I was thinking of the war, which we had also been discussing. The other two smiled knowingly, and one of them exclaimed: 'Sooner!' War broke out exactly a year later. I emphasise that I was not talking with friends I had known for many years, but with people who were comparatively new to me. As always happens in such cases, a short pause followed this exchange. Then, as though nothing had happened, we started talking about something else. Need I add that no one ever learned of our conversation?

I recall another conversation, after the war had already begun, with one of the teachers in the school where I was working. I regarded him as a man devoted to Bolshevism. He had never said anything to give grounds for suspicion of disloyalty to the regime. This time, however, he could not restrain himself:

'The Germans will wring our necks as though we were chickens. They'll polish us off in no time. No one will fight!'

Another example: Working with me in the school was K., a Jewish woman, who taught German. In the late autumn of 1941, she came to see me in my office for some reason or other (I was educational director of the school at that time). Having carefully closed the door, she said, 'There is something I want to talk to you about, but this must be between us. What do you think, Vladimir Dmitrievich, should we leave or not?'

She was asking about her family. Her father, a simple tailor, did not want to be evacuated with the Bolsheviks. I advised her, of course, to leave immediately, since the rumours of German extermination of the Jews were being confirmed. However, neither she nor her family believed these rumours, regarding them as Bolshevik propaganda.

I have cited these examples—and I could have cited a great many more—in order to show what the teachers' sentiments were. A further proof of their anti-Bolshevik views is the large number of teachers who remained in the German-occupied areas. They remained deliberately, not leaving with the Bolsheviks, to take an active part in the struggle against Bolshevism. The policy adopted by the Germans soon brought cruel disillusionment—but that is another question.

I do not mean to say that the greatest number of anti-Bolsheviks were to be found precisely among Soviet teachers. A representative of any other segment of the population could rightly object: anti-Bolshevik sentiment was dominant in all groups. However, each of us knows best the group to which he belonged. If it is true that there are just as many anti-Bolsheviks among the other strata of the population as among our teachers, then we can draw a very optimistic conclusion: the overwhelming majority of the Russian people are against the regime.

V. The Schools during the Second World War

In a totalitarian state, where everything is planned and calculated years ahead, it would seem that an event such as a war should not produce drastic changes in the life of the country. In reality, the picture was quite otherwise. Life was completely disrupted. Even a war like that with Finland disrupted the entire economic life of the country. Many kinds of goods disappeared, and lines began forming at the shops. The number of passenger trains was curtailed. In many cities, school buildings were requisitioned for use as hospitals.

All this was repeated during the Second World War, but on a gigantic scale. To begin with, about half of all school buildings were requisitioned and converted into hospitals or put to various military uses. Studies were either suspended altogether or else carried on

either in other schools on a third shift (almost every school had a second shift) or in hastily fitted-out residential buildings. The school in which I worked was relocated in houses in a workers' settlement.

In the fall of 1941, only about 50 per cent of the students came to school. There were several reasons for this: (1) Schools were given practically no wood or coal, and classes were held in unheated rooms. (2) In families whose men had gone to the front, the mothers and older children went to work, leaving the younger ones without supervision. (3) The general attitude was: 'Why should we waste our time studying now? The Germans will be here any day, and then we'll start all over again.' There were no gross violations of discipline in the schools, but demonstrations of anti-Soviet sentiment increased. Family attitudes were reflected in the children.

Teachers were not granted deferments from military service as were, for example, Party functionaries, factory managers, important engineers, etc. Only a few school principals were deferred. In a number of schools, as a result, instruction in certain subjects was halted; it was virtually impossible to find teachers to replace those who had been mobilised. In the spring of 1942, when the bombings started, classes were suspended in many schools.

During the war, anti-Bolshevik sentiment increased sharply among teachers and students and was displayed more frequently. In the winter of 1942, round-ups of deserters were carried out every night in Voronezh; among these were both deserters from the front and draft evaders. One of the collection points to which the police and NKVD brought the prisoners was the school in which I taught. Every night, forty to fifty deserters were gathered up from a comparatively small area. Both students and teachers knew about this. And whereas during the mass arrests of 1937 colleagues discussed the arrests only in whispers with intimates, now people talked openly about the round-ups of deserters, not concealing their attitude toward what was happening and toward the regime.

Also in the winter of 1942, it became known that the churches had been opened in the city and that they were filled with worshippers, including young people and students. Once, in my wife's Russian-language class (she was also a teacher), the students asked:

'Did you know that they've opened the church near the Mitrofanyevski Monastery? We've been there already. Have you?'

There was no defiance in their words—only a sincere interest in how their teacher would react to this event which was so unusual in Soviet life. In the fact that the students had already been to church —and not just one student, but many!—we saw not only an awakening of religious feeling (which, indeed, in many families had never died out) but also a collective anti-Bolshevik act.

The churches were indeed opened. But soldiers, for example, visited them only for the first few days. After that, it became known that the commanders of military units were quietly warning their troops that attending church could lead to unpleasant consequences. The churches were opened, but NKVD agents started spreading rumours that records were being kept of all those who attended services of worship. In spite of that, the churches were full. And our students were there!

The opening of the churches was taken to indicate a retreat before the people on the part of the regime and was regarded as a precursor of further changes. As a matter of fact, a so-called 'national course' in Bolshevik policy was launched; its purpose was to arouse the people to fight the Germans, and it ended with the conclusion of hostilities. This 'national course' was the best proof of the bankruptcy of Bolshevik, Communist ideas, a bankruptcy which could also be seen without difficulty in the schools.

In conclusion, I should note the negligible percentage of Party members among teachers. This may seem strange: The teacher's mission is to rear fighters for Communism—and among the teachers there are but few Party members. Yet, such is the case. I will cite some data to bear this out[1]:

1930. School No. 5, Orel: Only one Party member, a social-science instructor, out of eighteen teachers. School No. 2, Orel: No Party members. School No. 12, Orel: Only the principal was a Party member, though there were about thirty teachers in the school.

1940. School No. 17, Voronezh: Out of twenty-three teachers, only the principal was a Party member. School No. 66, Voronezh: Among about forty-five teachers, only the principal was a candidate for Party membership and two women teachers belonged to the Komsomol. In a number of other schools, there were no Party members at all.

[1] The author's figures are supported by Soviet statistics for this period. In 1930, according to the authoritative *Statisticheskii spravochnik* (1932), only 5 per cent of elementary and secondary school teachers were Party members; 8 per cent were members of the Komsomol.—Ed.

STUDENT LIFE IN A SOVIET UNIVERSITY

by H. G. Friese

I. Introduction

DURING the 1920s Soviet educational institutions underwent a period of wild experimentation and extreme anarchy, which had disastrous effects for both teachers and students. This experimental period, with its forced 'democratisation' of the schools, was marked by a definite anti-intellectual bias on the part of the old Bolsheviks and their followers—a tendency to view art, culture, and liberal or humanistic education as something 'bourgeois,' rather like the wearing of neckties, personal neatness, cleanliness, a polished manner, and 'romantic love.' All such 'bourgeois prejudices' were repudiated as inimical to the revolutionary spirit of genuine Marxism.

In higher education emphasis fell heavily upon narrowly technical and practical subjects, and there was a corresponding de-emphasis of theoretical and humanistic studies. Furthermore, the work of the older professors, who had received their training before the Revolution, was blocked and hampered at every step by Party, trade-union, and student supervision and control. Many of these men left the teaching profession. When the resulting shortage of teachers became acute, people who had only the vaguest connection with academic or scholarly circles were employed as university and technical-school teachers.

Greater than all of these obstructions to the development of Soviet higher education during the 1920s, however, was the cultural immaturity of the entering students, their almost eomplete lack of academic qualifications. The decree of August 18, 1918, which had opened the doors of all higher educational institutions to any citizen over sixteen who could demonstrate his proletarian or poor-peasant origin, brought a flood of wholly unprepared students into the universities and technical schools. An attempt was made to bridge the gap between uneducated workers and qualified university students

by the establishment (in the early 1920s) of *rabfaks*[1]; but their three- or four-year courses proved an inadequate substitute for normal primary and secondary school work.

Even during the late 1920s scarcely half of the student body of Soviet institutions of higher education came from working-class families; a majority of the students were older people from families of peasants, intellectuals, civil servants, or merchants, who, after the Revolution, had gone into the fields or factories for a few years, had distinguished themselves as 'activists' and in consequence had been recommended for study in a university or technical school. In general, the students of this period were very active and energetic, especially in those institutions (and faculties) where socio-political subjects were studied. They organised countless meetings, published wall newspapers, and conducted heated discussions on religion and dialectics, Newton and Hegel (without, of course, having read either Newton or Hegel). They spent almost half their time travelling to the villages on various 'campaigns,' working in industry or on farms, carrying out assignments of a propagandistic nature—and, in general, leading the life of dilettante activists.

During the early 1930s the Soviet policy with respect to higher education, and, indeed, toward education generally, changed sharply. In 1932 the authority of teachers and professors was partially restored, and they were given the right to evaluate students' work on a five-point scale. The 'brigade' system of collective study and examination by sampling the work of one representative student was abolished. A system of entrance examinations for institutions of higher education was set up. Political activities were no longer considered a valid excuse for failure to meet academic requirements. In 1934–35 the old faculties were reorganised in the universities and teachers' colleges; at the same time, the numerous short-term courses of the 1920s were dropped. Older professors were brought back from retirement, from exile in remote parts of the Soviet Union, and even from abroad. Komsomol interference with administrative matters was curtailed.

The contemptuous attitude toward culture and education which had characterised the 1920s was replaced during the 1930s by another extreme—a virtual worship of education and science. By the end of the 1930s there had been a complete reversion to older educational and cultural ideals, particularly with regard to the form and methods of education. This tendency was especially clear in the speeches and articles of President Kalinin. Stressing the value and importance of general cultural development and a classical education, he urged Party cadres, Komsomol members, teachers, and students 'to make

[1] See above, footnote 1, p. 39.—Ed.

the entire heritage of human culture your own, to master the heights of science and technology, to raise yourselves to the summits of knowledge, to become the best educated people in the whole world.'[1]

'If it were within my power,' Kalinin declared [in 1940] before an audience composed of secretaries of Komsomol regional committees, 'I would make you all read literature (belles lettres, works on art, science, and technology) for at least five hours a day, and thus turn you into literate and cultured people. . . .'[2]

By 1936, with the promulgation of the Stalinist Constitution, the Soviet socio-political structure had become more or less stabilised. Our further discussion of Soviet university life will be focused upon the period after 1936.

II. Everyday Life and Personal Relations

By the mid-1930s, Soviet ten-year secondary schools were turning out tens of thousands of young men and women who were well qualified to enter institutions of higher learning. For the first time in the history of the Soviet Union young students—eighteen to twenty years of age—comprised the majority of the entering classes in the universities and technical schools. And most of them had a fairly solid background in mathematics, physics, geography, history, and Russian language and literature. These young people were characterised by a certain naïveté and moral idealism; most of them had not yet formulated or accepted any particular world-view. The doses of 'Marxism-Leninism' and Soviet patriotism to which they had been exposed in the secondary schools had left them relatively unaffected.

The remainder of the entering classes were made up of graduates of *rabfaks* and secondary technical schools. Somewhat older than the graduates of the ten-year schools, these men and women were mature beyond their years, having lived as students away from home from the time they were fifteen or sixteen, an age at which their comrades in ten-year schools still lived at home and were regarded as pupils. In Russia, 'student' is a kind of rank or title which brings with it a series of unwritten grown-up rights and privileges. For example, one would hardly venture to tell a student not to smoke, or not to indulge in intimacies with the opposite sex. I well recall the self-satisfied air with which ten-year-school graduates at the university smoked their first cigarettes in public, or strolled with girl students for the first time in front of the university buildings and dormitories, carrying on businesslike conversations about science or the weather. Of course,

[1] Kalinin, M. I., *O kommunisticheskom vospitanii* [On Communist Education], Moscow, 1947, p. 30. Cf. pp. 15–21, 47, 56.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

young people in ten-year schools took strolls too; but until they came to the universities they didn't really believe in the possibility of businesslike and learned discussions between boys and girls. Moreover, there were the annoyance and embarrassment of that gently ironic or faintly patronising smile in the eyes of one's teacher. And secondary-school teachers had far-reaching authority when it came to controlling the out-of-school conduct of their pupils.

In general, it would be fair to say that graduates of the ten-year schools tended to be more naïve and idealistic than their older comrades from the *rabfak*s and secondary technical schools. In fact, one could divide Soviet university students into two groups (only partly parallel to the division between ten-year school graduates and others): those characterised by a naïve idealism and passionate enthusiasm for science and literature, and those with a 'layman's' cynicism toward intellectual pursuits and university life generally. Students in this second group regarded a university education primarily, if not exclusively, as a guarantee of higher earning power. For them the question of enriching or liberating the human personality through knowledge and education did not exist.

Between 1936 and 1940 admission to the universities was made contingent upon passing stiff competitive examinations. The competition was keenest, of course, in the universities and technical institutes of the big cities such as Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, Kazan, and Kharkov. Often there would be ten or even twenty applicants for each opening at the University of Moscow and between five and eight at the University of Odessa, while the smaller and less well-known universities and institutes had difficulty filling their quotas. Naturally enough, students who were turned down by the larger universities applied for admission to smaller universities or technical schools, where they were almost certain to be accepted. The result was that students in the latter institutions were decidedly inferior to those in the major universities. And during their university training, as a result of differences in quality of instruction and the presence or absence of an intellectually stimulating student body, these initial differences were further intensified.

All students who needed financial support and living quarters were given scholarships, and a supplementary payment for dormitory rooms, so long as they continued to pass all of their courses. Most students received scholarships, and a very large number lived in dormitories.[1] Tuition was free until 1940 when, by a Resolution

[1] Probably between one-third and one-half of the students lived in dormitories, the remainder living at home. But this proportion was higher in Moscow and Leningrad than in the smaller university cities.—Ed.

dated October 2, 'as a consequence of the increasing well-being of the workers' and 'in the interests of socialist society and the Soviet government,' tuition fees were introduced in higher educational institutions (300 to 400 roubles a year) and in the last three classes of ten-year secondary schools (150 to 200 roubles). The resolution abolished general scholarships; scholarships were now granted only as a reward for exceptional achievement, defined as a minimum of two-thirds 'excellent' and one-third 'good' on a student's grade-sheet.

In the earlier period (before 1940) scholarships had not been looked upon as rewards for exceptional achievement, but as a necessary means of support for ordinary students. Students put in their claims for scholarships and received them each month, just as one would draw wages or a pension. During a student's first year at the university the scholarship amounted to 125 roubles per month; during the second year, 150 roubles; during the third and fourth years, 175 roubles; and during the last year, 200 roubles. The rates were the same in (four-year) teachers' colleges and (five-year) technical institutes, except that in the former 200 roubles was allowed for the fourth (i.e., final) year, and in the latter 200 roubles for both the fourth and fifth years.[1] Scholarships were based on the calendar year, not the academic year, and thus continued to be paid during the two-month summer vacation. Graduates of universities and teachers' colleges were given an additional 200 roubles, over and above their regular stipends, as a bonus for passing the final state examinations.

The supplementary payment for dormitory accommodations amounted to ten or twelve roubles per month. The dormitories were either in large old houses or, less frequently, in specially constructed buildings. From the outside they looked like quite decent apartment buildings; inside, they were distinguished by long corridors, lined with countless doors which opened into separate rooms. Each such room housed between three and six students. Its furnishings were quite simple—four to six iron beds with clean linen, a common table in the middle of the room, a chair and night-table by each bed, a wall-rack, and a closet. The night-tables, which were similar to those used in hospital rooms, held various foodstuffs —bread, sugar, halvah, margarine, and—during the week or ten days after the scholarships were paid out, or when a student had received a parcel from home—sausage, lard, and pastry. Clean linen was stored on the bottom shelf of the night-table and dirty linen in a suitcase under the bed, or vice versa. The top drawer of the

[1] These figures apply to all parts of the Soviet Union except Moscow, where all stipends were ten roubles more per month. (See below, p. 181.)—Ed.

night-table held money, letters, notebooks, tobacco, tooth powder, a toothbrush, soap, a razor, and other personal effects.

New arrivals, as well as students returning from vacation, were not admitted into the dormitories until they had produced documents certifying that all of their belongings had been disinfected and that they themselves had bathed. They were then given bed-clothes and assigned to a room. Usually students would form groups and share a room which they had picked out beforehand.

The dormitories were kept clean; most of them were in better condition than many Soviet apartment houses. Numerous inspections were carried out by dormitory officials, sanitary commissions, and student organisations. Student monitors kept tab on the neatness of the rooms and on the behaviour of the dormitory students.

Most students ate one hot meal a day—in the dining hall—consisting of vegetable borscht and porridge, fruit dumplings, and an occasional cutlet. They had breakfast and supper in their own rooms, consisting of black bread and salt, sometimes with butter or sausage. Coffee, chicory, or boiling water (for tea) could be obtained from a common kettle downstairs in the dormitory.

The scholarship money was not sufficient to provide a varied, or even an adequate, diet. A great deal of it was spent for clothes; theatre, opera, and cinema tickets; tobacco and cigarettes; and membership dues in various organisations. Someone in the dormitory was always half starving himself in order to scrape together enough money for a new tie or pair of trousers, or to take his girl-friend to the opera or theatre and treat her to pastry or chocolate during the evening. The practice of 'Dutch treating' was considered rational, but somehow unbecoming; no self-respecting student would dream of extending the 'equality of women' into this sphere of personal relations.

In order to give some concrete idea of a student's budgetary problems, I will mention a few typical prices of items of food, clothing, etc. A kilogramme [2·2 pounds] of butter cost from 16 to 20 roubles; tea sausage cost 9·80 roubles a kilo, Kiev sausage 13·50. In the dining hall a dish of borscht cost from 60 kopecks[1] to 1·20 roubles, a serving of macaroni 40 kopecks, a cutlet 90 kopecks, schnitzel from 1·50 to 2 roubles. A tram ticket cost 15 kopecks, a pack of cigarettes anywhere from 35 kopecks to 7 roubles. A serge suit or cloth overcoat cost from 250 to 500 roubles; shoes ranged from 50 to 180 roubles per pair. A necktie cost between 7 and 20 roubles; caps and hats between 15 and 25 roubles. I might say, parenthetically, that in all my years at the university I never saw a

[1] One hundred kopecks make one rouble.—Ed.

student wearing a hat. In the summer men students went bareheaded or wore light caps; in the winter they wore heavy caps. The girls wore caps or kerchiefs.

Most students wore serge suits, but a fair number sported top boots, riding-breeches, and tunics or field jackets—a 'uniform' which was very popular with Party secretaries and members of the Party *aktiv*. A carry-over from the old military-proletarian psychology which emphasised simplicity, fellowship, and struggle, this costume remained popular with university students until Stalin exchanged his top boots, trousers, and simple tunic for a luxurious general's uniform with dress trousers and riding boots. Of course, many students wore not what they wanted to, but what they could afford. Even the poorer students, however, always took great pains to hide their shabby clothes and undarned socks and, in general, to present a solid and, wherever possible, elegant appearance.

It was very difficult to buy clothing in Soviet stores; there were almost always long lines in which one could stand not only for hours but literally for days and still not be sure of obtaining what one needed. As a result many students dealt on the black market, where one could get almost anything if one was willing the pay the price—from a cotton suit to the best woollens from Manchester or Tashkent. Here worn-out things could be sold and the proceeds applied toward the purchase of new garments. Of course, some students were able to avoid such difficulties because they had influential friends or relatives in the Party or government.

Most students bought very few books—one, two, perhaps as many as five a year. Rarely did students own more than ten books, and they seldom made very strenuous efforts to acquire more; there were enough books in the libraries, reading rooms, and clubs.

Problems of day-to-day existence occupied an important place in students' minds, but such problems were not usually of decisive significance. Students daydreamed of ways to obtain money, clothes, shoes, food, theatre tickets, rather than of ways to change the social system which created these problems. Similarly, they thought more about ways of avoiding the taint of political deviation than of protesting against political repression as such.

Men and women students were often lodged in the same dormitory. As far as possible they were placed on different floors, or in separate wings, but students of both sexes used the same reading rooms, recreation room, and dining-hall. Students could receive visitors only during certain set hours, and the only visitors permitted were relatives or students from other institutions of higher education. All visitors were required to leave their 'documents' (passports or student cards) with the doorman during their stay.

The relations between men and women students who lived in the same dormitory were friendly but not vulgar. Intimacies in the dormitory itself were practically impossible, and were considered out of place. But many men and women students were drawn together in more or less serious friendships—often with someone outside their own dormitory. Such friendships were considered inviolable by a third person and were usually kept within the limits of decency. A few students married while they were still at the university, but in most cases this was during their last year.

I recall one occasion when a couple were 'caught in the act' in a dormitory room. The resulting scandal was such that both of them had to leave the dormitory and the university. The upshot of it was that they were formally expelled. I mention this case as an example of the rather moralistic attitude of Soviet officials. But it should be emphasised that personal relationships took many and varied forms among Soviet university students—just as they do among students all over the world.

Nevertheless, it is true that with regard to relations between the sexes, the general atmosphere of a Soviet university was more romantic and sentimental (I am speaking of the late 1930s) and less sophisticatedly erotic than in many Western countries. Soviet women, including students, were in general innocent of the artificial refinements of 'sex appeal' cultivated by their sisters of Western Europe and America. They were more naïve, less experienced, and, of course, much more limited in their choice of clothing, cosmetics, and the like. This does not mean that they failed to make every effort to look attractive; but their aesthetic and amorous ideals were rather more primitive, closer to the ideal of natural red-cheeked beauty—say, that of Tatyana in Pushkin's *Yevgeni Onegin*, or of Natasha in *War and Peace*—than to refined or deliberate eroticism.

It should be emphasised that in the Soviet Union the female form is not displayed or exploited as it is in the West, in newspapers, motion pictures, or the plastic arts. The ballet furnishes the only (and partial) exception.

However, the moral code of Soviet students is not to be interpreted as a mere echo of the officially propagated ideals of Soviet morality, though in fact these ideals in recent years have come to correspond to the old pre-Revolutionary ideals of chastity before, and motherhood after, marriage. Russian girls, it would seem, have always had a deep-rooted instinct to defend their virginity. To what extent this is to be identified with the Kantian 'moral law within us' I cannot say; but I do know that under the severe and burdensome living conditions which prevailed in the Soviet Union during the 1930s (and in pre-Revolutionary Russia for the workers and peasants),

most women lost their youth and beauty soon after marriage. We will leave the question open as to how much of this resulted from innate characteristics and how much from socio-economic conditions. In any case, it seems clear that in the Soviet Union many girls tried to remain chaste in order to prolong the period of their youth and beauty.

Thus, at least after the mid-1930s, natural inclinations and the precepts of official Soviet morality mutually supported and supplemented one another.

III. Extracurricular Activities

Like their counterparts in other countries, Soviet university students differed in the way they spent their time. Some did nothing but study; others were preoccupied with social and organisational work of various kinds; still others worked part-time. But the average student found time—except during the hectic mid-year and final examination periods—to devote to recreation and relaxation. Volleyball, billiards, and chess were very popular; competitions and tournaments were always in progress, and there were some real experts among the student body. In addition there were a number of purely voluntary student groups, organised for the study and practice of drama, music, dancing (both folk-dancing and classical), etc. There were also literary reading circles.

Every Soviet institution of higher education had its own brass band; many also had symphony orchestras and dance orchestras. Several times each year a number of student groups pooled their talents and put on joint programmes, with soloists, glee clubs, dance groups, dramatic productions of scenes from the plays of Chekhov, Gogol, or Molière, and parodies of university life. Such programmes were often presented during the 'revolutionary holidays' (May 1, November 7, etc.), following upon solemn political meetings with speeches by Party and government leaders. The student programmes, which often sparkled with wit and humour, were in sharp contrast to the sombre and monotonous seriousness of the political programmes.

The revolutionary holidays, of course, were the occasion for mass student demonstrations. Everyone knew perfectly well that these demonstrations were not spontaneous (as was officially claimed), but were government inspired and organised. Nevertheless, they were regarded as one of the less unpleasant 'social duties' of Soviet students; student participation was on a large scale and was quite businesslike. Still, most of the participants—including Komsomol members—felt some inner resistance, something akin to embarrass-

ment and humiliation, at the necessity of carrying 'Bolshevik ikons' (slogans and poster-portraits of Party leaders, fastened to long poles). But it was considered essential that Soviet students develop the ability to overcome such 'subjective' feelings in order to meet the 'objective' demands of state and society. Students were repeatedly told that they, as future scientific specialists and political leaders, must set an example for the rest of the population. And sometimes one's sense of humiliation would suddenly give way to an opposite feeling—a sense of extreme pride and feverish enthusiasm.

Soviet universities, during the weeks before a revolutionary holiday, present a scene of intense activity: roles are being learned, money is being collected. Students buy new clothes; the stores are suddenly filled with hitherto unobtainable goods. The food in the dining halls becomes abundant. The whole country is in a heightened pre-holiday mood.

When the holidays arrive, the whole population takes to the streets. There is outdoor dancing and singing; orchestras play on every corner. In the evening there is a special dance at the university, with visiting actors and actresses and newly-erected stands serving pastries and lemonade. (Alcoholic beverages are not permitted in institutions of higher education, but the students have already 'had a few' at a local tavern.) The ballroom dancing is interspersed with spirited performances of various national dances.

Half-way through the evening the university rector, the Party organiser, and the professors with their wives say goodnight; but some of the teachers stay until the end of the dance. Responsibility for maintaining order devolves upon students appointed by the local trade-union committee, who keep a close lookout for incipient arguments and fist-fights—especially among the hot-tempered students from the Caucasus, such as the Georgians and Ossetians. They, more readily than others, were excused if the matter should come to official attention, because of their 'natural' hot-headedness. But there were also 'strong characters' among the Great Russians, Ukrainians, etc.; in addition there were former street urchins, *besprizornye*,[1] and persons who had spent their early years 'riding the rails' between Moscow, Vladivostok, Sevastopol, and Odessa. It is worth noting that in student circles such people were treated with no trace of contempt or condescension, but rather with respect and even awe. And they came under official scrutiny less often than their fellow-students who had parents and grandparents of possibly suspicious 'social status.' Soviet educational authorities devoted a good deal of attention to the problems of the *besprizornye*, and official agencies were often quite indulgent toward them, even when,

[1] Homeless or vagrant children.—Ed.

as university students, they candidly expressed unorthodox opinions in open meetings.

It was these students who always knew the choicest political anecdotes and parodies. Of course, such anecdotes—about Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Lenin, and Marx—could be repeated only in the most intimate circles. If an outsider appeared, everyone immediately 'clammed up' or started talking about something else.

IV. Literature, Philosophy, Politics

There are no reliable statistics on the reading habits of Soviet students; what follow are impressions and generalisations based upon personal experience and observation in Soviet libraries, university dormitories, and day-to-day conversation with university students. It is, of course, impossible to judge from the official figures of editions and sales of books in the Soviet Union what books students and the general reading public are actually reading; books are not published to meet reader demand, but to supply and replenish the countless libraries of schools, clubs, Party study rooms, factories, kolkhozes, etc.

What students were reading at a given time was in large part a matter of chance. Whoever read a 'very interesting' book would tell others about it, and soon it would be passing from hand to hand. Many, if not most, Soviet university students of the 1930s had grown up in homes where the reading of literary works was not a habit. Many students limited their reading to the older Russian translations of such authors as Alexandre Dumas, de Maupassant, Conan Doyle, Mark Twain, and Jules Verne. Others preferred Cervantes, Hugo, or Zola (also in Russian translation). None of the students had any conception of the nature, or even the existence, of contemporary non-Soviet literature. Most of the leading foreign works of the twentieth century in the fields of belles lettres, the social sciences, and philosophy, were not even mentioned by title in lectures or textbooks. Many of the older professors were familiar with the major foreign works of the period before 1917, but even they knew almost nothing of recent foreign works, or of the writings of Russian émigrés.

Students read such Soviet authors as Aleksei Tolstoy, Ostrovski, Gorky, Fadeyev, Sholokhov, and Simonov; however, they always preferred pre-Revolutionary writers, especially Pushkin, Lermontov Gogol, Chekhov—but also Turgenev, Leo Tolstoy, and Dostoyevski. Tolstoy and Dostoyevski were viewed with quite different eyes by Soviet readers than by Western European or pre-Revolutionary

Russian readers. Soviet students regarded many of the problems raised in these works as peculiar to the 'idle classes of society,' a product of their characteristically 'empty and hysterical' experience. Soviet students also found, often to their own amazement when they first read a work of Tolstoy or Dostoyevski, clear proof of the necessity for destroying the old social structure and building a new one—a doctrine of which they had had their fill from the Party history and the courses in Marxism-Leninism. Soviet readers were not, of course, insensitive to the aesthetic values of these works, but they lacked any broad, disciplined experience or refined criteria by which to evaluate them.

As for the metaphysical problems raised by these authors, they usually went over the heads of Soviet students, either because the latter had no direct experience of the doubts and needs out of which such problems arose, or—more often—because they as students were totally ignorant of the various ways in which such problems had been treated in the history of human thought. In their 'philosophy' (i.e., Marxism-Leninism) courses, students were simply taught to reject all metaphysics as such, without analysis of specific metaphysical doctrines. Furthermore—and this is typical of the Soviet method of instruction—no attempt was made to relate philosophical problems to the student's own emotional, intellectual, or spiritual life. Philosophical doctrines were treated as remote and abstract theories having nothing to do with the immediate experience of concrete human beings. The question of the individual person was either ignored or treated as a theoretical problem for historiography ('the role of the individual in history' à la Plekhanov).

Students, in general, were content to repeat the mechanical 'proofs' of dialectical and historical materialism; they almost never called into question the underlying principles and assumptions of this allegedly 'scientific' world-view. Most students were confident that 'science' would ultimately provide all the answers to all the questions that could be meaningfully asked. (Both the Webbs and Edouard Herriot noted accurately in 1934–35 that pure science 'represents a cult in the USSR.'[1]) In dialectical and historical materialism students found a simple, definitive, and optimistic world-view, one which freed them from the complex and difficult speculations of systematic philosophy and theology. As opposed to the philosophies of pessimism, dialectical materialism insisted upon the unlimited powers and possibilities of human reason, repudiating the 'mysticism' and 'irrationalism' of contemporary 'bourgeois' society. According to the official Soviet view, the bourgeoisie, entangled in the contradictions inherent in the capitalist order, is powerless to comprehend

[1] Webb, Sidney and Beatrice, *Soviet Communism*, 1936, p. 948.

the laws of social development; as a result it curses reason and turns to 'mysticism, intuition, the "subconscious" . . .'[1]

In the early 1930s political training and so-called 'Communist education' were entrusted to separate organisations and political study groups, but by the second half of the decade Marxism-Leninism had become an established academic subject. With the publication of the *Short Course on the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)* in 1938, the whole literate population, from university professors to elderly peasant women in remote villages, was set to work studying this 'encyclopedia of fundamental Marxist-Leninist knowledge.' In the institutions of higher education the *Short Course* was utilised as a text in Party history; the academic basis of Communist education was rounded out with political economy, dialectical and historical materialism, and Leninism. During the late 1930s the number of hours was substantially increased, and the separate chapters of the *Short Course* were studied in such exhaustive detail that it was often necessary to master several other books in order to 'work out' a single section. For example, in the faculties of history and philology, students read the basic works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, and a short survey of the history of philosophy as adjuncts to their study of the *Short Course.* It was no wonder that many students were left with the impression that the *Short Course* exhausted all the basic questions of philosophy.

Similarly, in studying Stalin's speeches and articles it was often necessary to consult several additional works in philosophy and the social sciences in order to gain a 'fundamental understanding' of a single section. Stalin was not popular as a theorist with either students or professors. They could honour him as a political leader, but they did not respect him as a thinker. Of course, everyone felt obliged to quote Stalin's writings from time to time, but any perceptive observer could sense that for most professors this was only a token of loyalty or a measure of self-protection. Occasionally a student at a meeting would raise the question as to why a certain professor had failed to quote such-and-such words of Comrade Stalin in the course of his exposition. Such questions put professors in a terribly awkward position. Sometimes they saved themselves by simply admitting their 'mistakes'; but at other times they were not so fortunate, because some government or Party official who had been waiting for just such an opportunity was quick to seize the chance to confound and get rid of them.

This situation improved somewhat after the disappearance of Yezhov, when a 'spontaneous' campaign against slander and

[1] Konstantinov, F., *O sovetskom sotsialisticheskom obshchestve* [On Soviet Socialist Society] (a collection of articles), Moscow, 1948, p. 351.

denunciation was organised. It was all too obvious that many people had been using political denunciation as a means of settling private grudges or eliminating personal rivals.

Although relations between students were friendly, gay, and intimate, they immediately became formal and 'official' when anyone's social origin or political convictions, or some current political event within the Soviet Union, were touched upon. Heated and wide-ranging discussions, on literature, philosophy, science, were carried on by students gathered in small groups in private apartments, dormitory rooms, or public parks. But even here certain subjects were taboo: the activity of the NKVD, arrests, terror, and forced-labour camps, as well as the 'private' (i.e., nonofficial) lives of government and Party leaders. When a student was expelled from the university for having concealed his social origin or in connection with the arrest of a close relative, his fellow-students tried to break off all relations with him, and somehow to avoid looking him in the face. Unfortunately, there were a good many such cases. The natural sense of indignation of those who had been temporarily spared was stifled by a secret fear. Many, no doubt, felt a kind of joyous relief that they themselves had not fallen this time—like that of a soldier in the front lines who finds himself still alive after a heavy shelling by the enemy. Without question, many people told themselves that they must be even more careful and 'loyal' in the future. The rare individual who expressed his indignation or disgust usually did not last very long.

In the main, discussion of political questions was limited to a purely theoretical exercise, working out the 'correct' explanation and theoretical interpretation of a given event. Although very few students actually admired the insipidly written *Short Course*, they found the mental gymnastics of working out such interpretations from the standpoint of Marxism-Leninism rather interesting. From this it was a relatively short step to belief in the doctrines of dialectical and historical materialism, especially since Soviet students were wholly ignorant of the categories and doctrines of other systematic philosophies and had no basis for comparison or criticism. Besides, most of the students limited themselves to preparing for the numerous oral examinations in Marxism-Leninism and were satisfied if they were able to give the answers which their examiners expected of them.

At least one cardinal tenet of Marxism-Leninism was sincerely accepted by most university students, as well as ten-year-school pupils, namely, that all preceding social systems, as well as present systems beyond the pale of Soviet socialism, were and are deeply unjust, the workers and peasants being robbed of the fruits of their labour by predatory landlords and capitalists. It was not merely the

'scientific' criticism of Marx's *Capital* which convinced them of this, but also Russian literary works of the nineteenth century, including the writings of Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Goncharov, and Chernyshevski, and—among foreign authors—Schiller, Zola, and many others. All of these works, as well as such very different literary productions as the plays of Shakespeare, were interpreted in a peculiarly Soviet light: every protest, however veiled, indirect, or qualified, was taken as an expression of the struggle against the social system of the period and as a manifestation of the movement toward socialism as it was to be realised in the USSR. The fact that the protests found in many of these works were not directed against the bourgeois system or against philosophic idealism, but were in favour of one or both, was systematically ignored—as was the obvious fact that the genuine problems of *Hamlet* and *Faust* (for example) are rooted more deeply in psychology and metaphysics than in sociology.

It was a very rare student who was able to undertake any independent scientific or scholarly research. In addition to the more obvious obstacles of a political nature, there was the linguistic barrier: most students did not have a knowledge of foreign languages sufficient for the study of primary sources. The resolution of the Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars dated June 23, 1936, urging the development of scientific and scholarly research in Soviet institutions of higher education, had no tangible results. As before, 'independent' study was limited to standardised textbooks and 'recommended' sources.

Even with the onset of official Soviet and Great Russian chauvinism in the late 1930s, the outstanding achievements of foreign scientists and scholars were not denied in university lectures or textbooks. One could scarcely study the special sciences and not recognise such achievements. But wherever possible they were explained as a result of the (often unconscious) 'progressive, revolutionary class-position' or 'dialectical-materialist viewpoint' of the foreign scientist or scholar, or—alternatively—as a result of the 'fact' that these achievements were based upon those of Soviet or Russian scientists. I feel confident that this official chauvinism with regard to science, scholarship, and, indeed, all culture, has not succeeded in undermining the Soviet students' respect for foreign science and scientists. On the other hand, university students, and the intelligentsia generally, were pleased and flattered to hear themselves referred to in official Soviet pronouncements as 'the bearers of the most advanced culture in human history.' Zhdanov, for example, in 1946 asked rhetorically: 'Is it for us, Soviet patriots and representatives of progressive Soviet culture, to accept the role of admirers or

pupils of bourgeois culture? Clearly, our literature, which reflects a higher social order than any bourgeois-democratic one and a culture which is many times greater than any bourgeois culture, has the right to teach others a new universally human morality.'[1]

V. Theatre, Opera, Ballet, Motion Pictures

This brings us to a third essential component in the political education of Soviet students, over and above the one-sided theoretical study of Marxism-Leninism, and the strong arm of political repression, already discussed. I refer to the inculcation of political, ideological, and, in particular, patriotic convictions through appeal to the emotions. Here we enter upon the domain of literature and art, which, as an authoritative Soviet spokesman puts it, 'have always served political ends.'[2] Although literature, the plastic arts, and even music have in recent years become more and more subordinated to political demands, this process had not progressed very far, relatively speaking, in the early and middle 1930s. At that time many theatrical and operatic works were presented which had nothing whatever to do with Marxism-Leninism. The explanation, in part at least, is that the Soviet Union has always had a dual ambition: to play the role both of a builder of a new socialist culture and of a bearer of a general 'universally human' culture.

In any case, Soviet students were given the opportunity to attend theatres, opera, symphony concerts, and art galleries, not to mention the motion-picture theatres, as often as they wished. From time to time the local trade-union committee would organise a so-called 'culture drive'; the whole opera house or concert hall would be reserved exclusively for students, and tickets would be priced as low as possible—from 50 kopecks to 2 roubles. Aside from these drives, student tickets were regularly distributed by the trade-union committee at reduced prices. Symphony tickets could always be had free; they were even offered to students at the university. But relatively few students were interested in serious instrumental music. Some students were not even interested in the opera. Others preferred the Russian drama, and still others went only to the cinema.

Good seats were expensive in the big opera and ballet theatres—from 3 to 15 roubles—but seats in the 'peanut gallery' went for as little as 1·50 roubles. In the legitimate theatre decent seats could be had for 2 roubles, and the cheapest seats for 75 kopecks. All of the major university cities—Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, etc.—had large opera houses, theatres, symphony orchestras, and

[1] Zhdanov, A., *Doklad o zhurnalakh 'Zvezda' i 'Leningrad'* [Report on the Journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*], Moscow, 1946, pp. 35–36.

[2] Konstantinov, *op. cit.*, p. 404.

summer theatres, not to mention the numerous motion-picture theatres, new and old, where each film was preceded by a stage show in the lobby or in a special hall, and where rooms were set aside for playing chess or reading.

Before the Second World War, new Soviet works appeared in the opera and theatre repertoires from time to time, but more than half of the works performed were drawn from the traditional repertoire, both Russian and Western. During the late 1930s, and especially during the 1940s, the works of Soviet authors and composers began to appear more frequently.

The motion picture—which Lenin regarded as the 'most important of the arts' and which Stalin called the 'greatest medium of mass agitation'—was, without doubt, the supreme means for inculcating the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, Soviet morality, and Soviet patriotism, in the general public, and specifically in Soviet students. Songs from both motion pictures and operas, as well as popular songs by Soviet composers, were widely performed, both by public entertainers and private citizens, in the universities and schools, at picnics, in the parks, on trams, in the fields and factories. They undoubtedly played a powerful propagandistic role. Like other Soviet art forms, they repeated infinite variations on a single theme: praise of Soviet life and Soviet society, glorification of socialist construction and defence of the 'socialist motherland.' It is significant that when these rather abstract political notions were replaced by themes which tapped sources of deep feeling, with the new upsurge of Russian patriotism and (at least temporary) respect for general moral and humane ideals, during the War, some remarkable works of literature and art—sentimental, to be sure—were produced.

It was a rare student who was not carried away by these sentimental productions and by other popular forms of literature and art. Most students were too young to have any independent perspective from which to evaluate the stereotyped products of Soviet art and propaganda; besides, their artistic taste and critical acumen were relatively undeveloped, and they had only the most fragmentary and unreliable basis for comparison. As a consequence, their enthusiasm for many works of popular Soviet art is quite understandable.

VI. Party and Komsomol

The political life of the Soviet universities, like that of other sectors of Soviet society, was carried on in 'campaigns' which underwent periodic changes of content. The organisations which participated in these campaigns—Komsomol, Osoaviakhim,[1] MOPR,[2]

[1] See footnote 1, p. 28 above. [2] See footnote 2, p. 28 above.

Red Cross and Red Crescent, and the League of the Militant Godless —were all under the direction of the 'Party organisation.' There was no separate Party cell in the universities; individual Party members —in the university administration, among the teaching staff, and (a very few) among the older students—were grouped into the Party organisation of the university. This organisation, together with the Party organiser (*partorg*), the Party committee (*partkom*), or Party bureau (*partbyuro*), had a hand in every aspect and detail of university life. But its influence upon individual students was indirect, through the administration and the various student organisations.

The rector of the university or his deputy was usually a Party member, as were the secretary of the Komsomol organisation, the instructor in military science, and a few others in key positions. All important decisions affecting university policy were taken at closed meetings of the Party committee, or joint meetings of the Party committee, the university administration and the Komsomol, represented by its secretary. They were then placed before a general Komsomol or student meeting. At such open meetings current events, both foreign and domestic, were also discussed.

Here is a brief account of such a meeting: When the general meeting is announced, course monitors, Komsomol organisers, and trade-union committee members are mobilised, so that they, in turn, may mobilise the student body for the forthcoming meeting. At this point, any student who has a valid excuse disappears; such meetings are very unpopular. But, because of the close check taken on attendance, they are well attended.

The agenda for the day, let us say, is a *Pravda* article devoted to unmasking the 'unstable and unreliable elements' in the Soviet population who are 'impeding socialist construction.'

First, a president and secretary (sometimes a whole presidium) are elected for the meeting. A list of candidates for these positions is read off by the Komsomol secretary or some other official. The vote: 'For?' 'Against?'—'Unanimously accepted!' If there is a presidium —ordinarily made up of the deputy rector, the Party organiser, a representative of the regional Party committee, the president of the trade-union committee, the Komsomol secretary, the instructor in military training, and two student representatives (one of each sex) —it first takes its place around a long table. Someone sitting in a front row passes a piece of paper up to the table. The president unfolds it, reads it, and announces: 'Comrades, it has been proposed that Comrade Stalin be elected honorary secretary of this meeting.' The Party organiser stands up and applauds; everyone else follows suit. (On particularly solemn or weighty occasions the whole Politburo is elected as an 'honorary presidium.')

The meeting is opened by the Party organiser or the representative of the regional Party committee. Next there are speeches by the deputy rector, the Komsomol secretary, a student-activist, the instructor in Party history, etc. All of the speeches represent faithful replicas of current *Pravda* editorials: the capitalist encirclement is trying with all its might to destroy the USSR, that great example of the emancipation of the workers; but the capitalists and their agents cannot do this openly because of the valorous Red Army, so they attempt to destroy the Soviet state from within, hiring spies, saboteurs, wreckers, traitors, thieves, Trotskyites, and psychopaths. These paid foreign agents have thousands of subtle and varied techniques for enticing Soviet citizens into their ranks. And who among the Soviet population gives in to these insidious influences?—the surviving petit-bourgeois elements, people with bourgeois morals and ways of thinking, moral degenerates, people without ideas or principles who can be bought for money, people who have not seriously studied Marxism-Leninism and thus are not strong in 'scientific consciousness,' passive people who have never felt a burning love for their socialist motherland.

All this is uttered in the most threatening tones, interlarded with blunt references to the iron hand of the Soviet punitive apparatus. And the first part of the meeting ends with a sinister question: 'How many such people are sitting here among us at this very moment? But their turn will come. . . .'

Next, a vote is taken on the previously prepared resolution, which, of course, is adopted without a dissenting voice. It is resolved, for example, to expel all students whose parents have been arrested. Many students feel perplexity, resentment, even disgust. But, on the other hand, there are the 'facts' of domestic sabotage and the 'fact' (accepted by most students) that the 'greedy imperialists have killed millions of persons in wars to conquer new markets and inflate their profits.' Many students go one step further and accept the alleged 'fact' of widespread intervention by 'capitalist agents' in Soviet internal affairs.

The following example will give an idea of the absurd lengths to which such spy-mania was carried in Soviet student life. A Party organiser, at a student meeting in a Soviet institution of higher education, mentioned a theft which had occurred a few days before: a student's overcoat, shoes, and two or three shirts had been stolen from a ground-floor dormitory room in which the window had been left open. 'And perhaps you think,' said the Party organiser, 'that this was an ordinary theft. How naïve you are. This was the work of a class enemy, whose object was to put this student in a desperate situation by depriving him of essential articles of clothing, and thus

to embitter him. Then the class enemy planned to approach him with offers of money and clothes, to get him drunk, and thus draw him into his hateful work.'

What is important here is not the Party organiser's fanciful interpretation of quite ordinary events, but the fact that none of the students who heard this interpretation ventured to laugh. Of course, the Party organiser was trying to frighten everyone out of stealing, and he knew quite well that greater fear can be instilled by the threat of conviction for a political offence than for a criminal offence. This practice was widespread among Party and Komsomol officials. But even here a great deal depended upon the particular Party organiser or Komsomol secretary. Some of them displayed only as much 'political initiative' in such matters as the Party organisation compelled them to.

The Komsomol, which accepted 'progressive Soviet young people' from sixteen to twenty-six years of age, committed its members to (1) mastering Marxism-Leninism; (2) participating actively in political life; (3) displaying an exemplary attitude toward socialist labour and fighting against 'negative manifestations' in Soviet life; (4) mastering science, technology, and culture; and (5) studying military science and showing a loyal devotion to the Soviet motherland.

During the late 1930s a large proportion, probably more than half, of all students in Soviet institutions of higher education were Komsomol members (though it was not always possible to identify them). Many students had joined the Komsomol while they were still in the ten-year schools. Students' reasons for joining were extremely varied. In some schools and universities there was a tendency, especially during the early 1930s, to accept *only* Komsomol members, the explanation being that, since the Komsomol was the organisation of progressive Soviet youth, and since only progressive young people could study in Soviet institutions of higher education, it followed that anyone who wanted to study in those institutions must be a member of the Komsomol.

When a majority of the students in a given class, group, or course were Komsomol members, it was rather difficult for the others not to join. Non-members were frequently cross-examined as to why they had not joined; their 'social origins' were examined, etc. Such pressures caused many people to join the Komsomol in an attempt to divert political suspicion. In this they were partly—but only partly —correct; it was usually taken for granted that Komsomol members had a 'clean past' since people known to be from 'bourgeois' or deported families were not officially accepted into the Komsomol.

During the 1920s and early 1930s many parents were strongly

opposed to their children joining the Komsomol. The sharp tension and conflict between family traditions and values on the one hand, and the political and ideological demands of the school and Komsomol on the other, was the cause of deep mental anguish for many young students. In more than a few cases this conflict ended in suicide. By the late 1930s, however, this antagonism had been largely blunted. Even conservative families had grown more or less reconciled to Soviet reality, and the schools had again become academic and scholarly, rather than exclusively political and economic, institutions. At the same time the Komsomol became more and more identified with the academic and cultural life of the schools; during these years many students joined the Komsomol for quite respectable reasons.

The mechanism of admission to the Komsomol was fairly complicated. Each candidate had to write out a short autobiography and then submit to a detailed oral questioning. He was asked such questions as: 'What did your father do before 1917?' 'What did your father or older brother do during the Revolution? What are they doing now?' 'Are any of your relatives living abroad or under arrest? Do you write to them?' Similar questions were asked of students on numerous other occasions, for example, when they were being considered for some position in a student organisation, or during the examination to determine eligibility for military service.

In addition to evidence of political reliability, the candidate had to present an acceptable academic record. The admission of a candidate was often postponed if his grades were too poor. Next, friends of the candidate and Komsomol members who had endorsed his application for membership were questioned: 'What is your estimate of the applicant's character? Is he friendly? A good comrade? How does he behave with girls? Is he faithful to his girl-friend, or is he fickle?' This last question was asked in a playful tone.

After the questioning, the Komsomol secretary presented the recommendation of the committee (to accept, postpone, or temporarily reject), and asked whether there were any other proposals. Then a vote was taken. Sometimes the Komsomol members voted to admit the candidate over the negative recommendation of the committee, but not as a rule.

Komsomol members had no formal privileges in Soviet institutions of higher education except that they were exempt from the incessant questioning (to which non-members were subjected) as to why they hadn't yet joined. They were also preferred for appointment to leading positions in student organisations and for 'assignment to social duties.' But, since most students made strenuous efforts to avoid such assignment, this was a dubious Komsomol privilege.

The chief difference between Komsomol members and others was that the former were held more strictly accountable for their personal lives and for fulfilling the 'duties of a student and citizen.' Their personal life, in fact, was reduced to a bare minimum. The relevant slogans were: 'An honest Komsomol member has nothing to hide!' and 'Social interests above individual interests.' For instance, one Komsomol member was reprimanded for flirting 'seriously' with two girls at the same time; a married Komsomol member was sharply rebuked for unfaithfulness to his wife. He could also be brought to order for drunkenness or for spending too much time on sports and recreation at the expense of his work. It frequently happened that some university comrade would invite a Komsomol member to a party or outing, and the latter would refuse, saying, 'No, I can't go. I'm in the Komsomol, you know. They would look into it afterwards.' If a Komsomol member was personally untidy or slovenly he would be told to change his shirt or get a haircut: 'You should be ashamed of the example you're setting.'

By the end of the 1930s Komsomol members were complaining more and more frequently that they had only duties and no privileges or rights. Many made secret plans to get out of the Komsomol ('I'll fix it so that they'll have to expel me'). As a matter of fact, the Komsomol in the early 1940s was slowly becoming an organisation of climbers, 'outstanding' students, teachers' pets, and people with narrow, Philistine ambitions.

VI. Other 'Voluntary' Student Organisations

The other student organisations already mentioned were not nearly so important or pervasive in their influence upon student life, but they did play a significant part in the institutions of higher education. Osoaviakhim had close to a one-hundred-per-cent membership, as befitted a 'voluntary mass organisation.' Its members were trained in anti-aircraft and chemical defence and were prepared to qualify as 'Voroshilov marksmen.' They were required to pass oral examinations and field tests on explosives, firearms, bombs, grenades, and poison gases, including both their use and measures of defence against them. To qualify as a 'Voroshilov marksman' one had to know how to handle rifles and small arms and to shoot accurately. Those who passed the oral examinations and field tests were rewarded with badges. However, since many students had won their badges in ten-year schools, they had nothing to do in Osoaviakhim unless they joined one of the special groups—for pilots, glider pilots, or paratroopers, or for building and flying model airplanes and rockets. After the Second World War Osoaviakhim turned to such peacetime matters as the management and repair of agricultural

machinery, automobiles, and locomotives—as well as questions of the use of atomic energy.

The activities of Osoaviakhim were closely tied in with the regular military section of the academic programme under the direction of an instructor in military science, usually a staff captain or major. Military studies included strategy and tactics, field exercises and manoeuvres, and map-reading and drawing. It was planned that upon induction into the armed forces every graduate could be made an officer within a few weeks or, at most, months.

It should be noted that during the 1930s university and technical school students were deferred pending completion of their studies. After graduating, many students got further deferments through the appropriate People's Commissariat; the need for technical specialists in various fields was extremely acute. But in 1940, when free tuition and universal scholarships were abolished, student deferments also came to a halt. Graduates of ten-year schools had to serve out their two-year period in the army immediately. In order not to interrupt their education, many young men went directly from the ten-year schools into advanced military colleges and academies, and thus became professional military specialists and officers. In this way the Soviet government created a trained officer corps and a group of military experts. Graduates of ten-year schools, of course, preferred studying in the tuition-free military colleges where they were assured of all necessities, to serving out their terms as enlisted men. They knew that, if and when war broke out, they would be mobilised for an indefinite period in any case.

Osoaviakhim was also tied in with various athletic organisations, whose-aim was to bring all students up to the levels of the GTO[1] 'complex'—the minimum of physical fitness required by the government. Students who attained the established standards of performance in running, jumping, swimming, tumbling, calisthenics, running obstacle-courses, etc., were given GTO badges. In addition, students were encouraged to play volleyball, soccer, and basketball, and to participate in other sports of their choice.

The Union of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, another 'voluntary mass organisation,' had as its task the dissemination of elementary medical knowledge and the principles and techniques of first aid. All students were required to pass an examination set up by the GSO[2] and to become members; but afterwards they usually forgot all about it, except during the monthly collection of dues.

[1] Abbreviation for *Gotov k trudu i oborone* [Ready for Work and Defence]. —Ed.

[2] Abbreviation for *Gotov k sanitarnoi oborone* [Ready for Sanitary Defence]. —Ed.

Student membership in MOPR and the League of the Militant Godless was largely nominal, and consisted for the most part in signing the membership rolls and paying periodic dues. Incidentally, such dues, which ranged from 25 kopecks to one rouble per month, were exacted by all 'voluntary' organisations. Anyone who could do so avoided joining one or more of these organisations, but such evasion was seldom successful for very long. Party and Komsomol pressure was so persistent that most students eventually joined all of the 'voluntary mass organisations.'

MOPR sometimes called meetings to protest against the punishment of some revolutionary in a 'capitalist' country or against the 'violation of humane principles' by 'capitalist' governments. In fact these meetings were arranged by the Party or government, but everything was done in the name of MOPR, and since MOPR was allegedly a 'voluntary mass organisation,' the press referred to these meetings as 'spontaneous mass demonstrations' on the part of the students.

The League of the Militant Godless played an important part during the early 1930s, but by the late 1930s it was largely forgotten. I do not know what became of it after the restoration of church life in the Soviet Union in 1943. There was, however, almost no 'religious problem' in the lives of university students during the early 1930s. Of course, the eternal question of what there was 'in the beginning,' and what there was 'before that,' was heatedly discussed in lectures and classes on dialectical materialism—not that students accepted the account given in the book of Genesis, but simply that the question always remained unclear and unresolved. Probably most students accepted the scientific account of the creation of the world and man. The fashionable theory of the formation of the earth and the solar system at that time was the Kant-Laplace hypothesis; the fashionable theory of the development or organisms was, of course, that of Darwin.

Very few students doubted the widely promulgated slogan, 'Religion is the opium of the people'; nevertheless, few of them wanted to have any part in active campaigns against religion or in the active denial of God. The vulgar anti-religiosity of some students was regarded by their fellow-students as tactless and in bad taste.

Religious practices were considered incompatible with Party or Komsomol membership, or even with the status of 'student' or specialist. Any student, teacher, specialist, or official who was discovered to be a church member was certain to be removed or expelled; but this was often done under some other pretext.

VIII. Conclusion

Considering the low standard of living of the Soviet population generally, that of students in Soviet institutions of higher education was quite good. The students themselves realised this, if only indirectly. But their relatively privileged position, at least until 1940, was not envied by the population as a whole; rather, Soviet citizens, even the poorest, looked upon students in a sympathetic and friendly way.

Soviet students were assured of a place to live, regular scholarships, free tuition (until 1940), and free medical care. Various avenues of culture were opened to them at reduced prices, or even free. They were given ample opportunity to participate in groups devoted to science, art, sports, and other recreations. At any time up to the end of their full university course they could find work that accorded with their abilities and training. Graduates were assured positions in their professional or technical specialty at salaries which, by general Soviet standards, were quite decent.

But all of these positive features of student life were set against the dark background of political terror, something against which students, like the Soviet population generally, had no sure safeguard. It was, in part, the attempt to avoid this terror which caused students to accept the stereotyped demands of Party and university officials, to join 'voluntary' political organisations, etc. The general tone of such organisations appealed to the militant emotions of hatred and anger rather than to more moderate or reasonable ones. But some students took an enthusiastic part in their activities.

Students were encouraged in the exercise of individual initiative and were afforded opportunities to develop their creative abilities in science, technology, art, and social life, so long as such activities were in harmony with the aims and ideology of the Soviet state. The non-political aspects of student life were characterised by great enthusiasm, good humour, originality, and a remarkable tolerance.

The one-sided emphasis upon Marxism-Leninism as a philosophy and ideology had the advantage, in terms of the social structure, of giving most Soviet students a definite world-view based upon a set of clearly defined principles. It was rarely that a student called into question the theoretical foundations of Marxism-Leninism. In their approach to philosophy and the social sciences, even students who were not convinced Marxist-Leninists relied heavily upon Marxism-Leninism, both because they had no knowledge of other philosophic and sociological doctrines and for reasons of self-preservation. But no one ever sincerely managed to reconcile himself to political repression. In fact, the existence of political terror was probably

the single most important reason for non-acceptance of Marxism-Leninism on the part of Soviet students. In some cases, convinced Marxist-Leninists withheld their approval of Soviet practice and even repudiated it with horror. But they did not turn to capitalist practice (as they understood it) as an alternative approach to the solution of social problems.

As time passed, students felt fewer and fewer doubts about the Soviet system and Marxism-Leninism; or rather (by the late 1930s), the question of their validity and legitimacy simply did not arise.[1] Students concerned themselves rather with questions of ways of improving the Soviet system in order to overcome its many original defects. The propagandistic identification of Soviet aims and ideals with what were alleged to be the highest moral and cultural values and ideals of mankind served to intensify Soviet patriotism and to develop the self-confidence and self-assurance of Soviet citizens. This applied particularly to students in Soviet institutions of higher education.

The reader should be warned that in the present study the political atmosphere of Soviet universities has probably been brought out more clearly and forcibly than it actually appeared in the minds of students. Often Soviet students forgot almost completely about the existence of political terror, only to awaken suddenly to its ubiquitous reality, realising with a pang of regret how beautiful life might be if only the ever-present threat of this terror could be removed.

[1] For a contrasting evaluation, see above, pp. 35–37; see also below, pp. 164, 172, 184.

TEACHERS' COLLEGES IN THE SOVIET UNION

by Ivan Rossianin

I. Organisation of Teachers' Colleges.

IN this article I shall attempt to survey a typical Soviet Russian teachers' college. Teachers' colleges in the various non-Russian Soviet Republics have their own special characteristics, and it would be dangerous to generalise my remarks to apply to all of them.

Teachers' colleges are the oldest institutions of higher education in Soviet Russia. Like other institutions of higher education, they have undergone various changes during the past twenty-five years, but their curricula and general structure have changed less than have those of the universities or technical schools.

After the October Revolution the number of teachers' colleges increased considerably. Some of the new colleges were created from teachers' seminaries of the old type, but the majority are entirely new. At present there is not a single city in the USSR, however insignificant, which does not have at least one teachers' college. The metropolitan centres have several. Leningrad alone has four such colleges; Moscow has three.

The teachers' colleges train teachers specifically for seven-year and ten-year secondary schools. Elementary-school teachers are trained in teachers' training schools, or take individual courses. Students who make the best grades on their final examinations are assigned to ten-year schools, those with lower grades to seven-year schools. Exceptions are made in the case of students who are Party members. Regardless of their academic accomplishments, they are assigned to ten-year schools. Students who fail the state examinations are classified as 'course auditors' and assigned to teach in elementary schools. In all my experience, I have never known the State Examination Commission to fail a student who was a Party member. The

term of study—four years—is the same for all teachers' colleges throughout the country.[1]

Teachers' colleges are organised into the following faculties (*fakul'tety*):

(1) Physics and mathematics
(2) Natural sciences and geography
(3) Language and literature
(4) Foreign languages
(5) History (only in the larger colleges).

It is not mandatory that every teachers' college have all of these faculties; it depends on the teaching staff available in the area. One college often supplements another.

During their last two years, the students must select a specialty; the programme of the first two years is of a general-educational character. The number of students in a given faculty varies in different colleges, but never exceeds six or seven hundred. The teaching staff of each faculty is about thirty-five or forty. Some teachers' colleges have a total of more than three thousand students.

Each faculty is headed by a dean, who supervises the setting up of curricula and examinations and current administrative work of the departments (*kafedry*). As a rule, the dean is a Party member, while the professors, who are specialists, are non-Party people.

Teachers' colleges usually include the following departments:

(1) Mathematics and physics	under faculty of physics and mathematics
(2) Natural sciences (botany and zoology)	under faculty of natural science and geography
(3) Geography (cartography, geology and astronomy)	
(4) History	under faculty of history
(5) Languages and literature	under faculty of language and literature
(6) Paedagogy	common to whole college [subjects required of all students]
(7) Principles of Marxism	

The chairman of a department is usually a person with broad teaching experience and a higher academic degree. The department is responsible for preparing lecture courses and supervising curricula, teaching methods, and special academic projects, as well as the preparation and defence of theses and the granting of degrees.

[1] This contrasts with *five* years for Soviet university and technical school courses.—Ed.

The right to grant degrees is reserved to a few metropolitan colleges —those in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Kharkov, Kazan, etc. Only two advanced degrees are given in the Soviet Union: the degree of Candidate of Sciences and that of Doctor of Sciences.[1] In order to qualify for a degree, the student must present and publicly defend a dissertation in his special field, and also complete three years of graduate work, or else pass a candidate's 'minimum' (an examination covering graduate work).

Candidates of Sciences, as well as Doctors of Sciences, are entitled to professorships. The candidate's degree, of course, is lower than the doctor's degree. (The master's degree, which existed in Tsarist Russia, was abolished by Soviet authorities.) Teachers without degrees who give their own lecture courses are called 'senior instructors' (*starshiye prepodavateli*). Those who conduct practical and laboratory exercises, as well as those who lead seminars and conduct oral examinations, are called instructors. Below them are assistants, laboratory assistants (*laboranty*) and 'demonstrators' (*preparatory*). They prepare the material for practical and laboratory work and sometimes guide the students in their practical exercises.

In addition to academic degrees, there is a hierarchy of academic ranks, which runs as follows:

(1) Student.
(2) Diploma Student. (One who is working for a diploma. This applies only to universities; the teachers' colleges give only a state examination, which entitles those passing it to a diploma.)
(3) Graduate Student (*aspirant*). (One who is preparing to teach in a higher educational institution and is working under a particular department.)
(4) Assistant. (One who guides students in practical exercises.)
(5) Lecturer (*dotsent*). (One who gives his own lecture course.)
(6) Professor. (One who gives his own basic course and is in charge of a department [*kafedra*].[2])
(7) Academician. (Corresponding member or full member of the Academy of Sciences.)

The Ministry of Education frequently set deadlines by which all members of a given teaching staff were supposed to obtain academic degrees. But in practice this did not bring the desired results because

[1] According to Soviet statistics (1949) the total number of Soviet Doctors of Sciences in that year was 7,800, and of Candidates of Sciences 40,000. (Cf. *Soviet Affairs Notes*, Washington D.C., No. 160 (1954), p. 5.)—Ed.

[2] However, some Soviet professors are not department heads and some departments are headed by lecturers (*dotsenty*).—Ed.

of the extreme caution with which members of teaching staffs approach publication under Soviet conditions.[1]

Academic titles and degrees do not always correspond to the academic qualifications of the persons receiving them. As an example of crude mockery of science, one can point to Papanin, a Doctor of Geographic Sciences, who had the rank of boatswain on a polar expedition, was a member of the NKVD, and political leader of the expedition. The value of his scientific work is nil. There are many such examples, including Trofim Lysenko, Academician of Agricultural Sciences and member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Here, science is subordinated to purposes of political propaganda.

As a rule, the dean of a teachers' college is a member of the Communist Party. He has two deputies, one in charge of academic matters, the other in charge of administration. Actually, no Soviet educational institution enjoys the autonomy which Russian universities had before the Revolution. They are subjected in all matters, without exception, to the Ministry of Education and are completely dependent on the central authorities.

II. Student Discipline

Students are required to attend all courses in the curriculum, regardless of whether they are interested or not. Attendance is taken for each hour (by a monitor elected by the student body) and is checked by the dean's office. The same applies to tardiness. The first time a student is tardy, he gets off with a rebuke, the second time with a 'severe rebuke.' The third time he is expelled. This is called 'enforcement of labour discipline.' It applies equally to 'lazy' instructors and to 'violators of labour discipline' among professors and lecturers. If an instructor is late for his lecture this is discussed at a departmental meeting. If he is as much as twenty-two minutes late (the lecture hour, the so-called academic hour, lasts forty-five minutes, with a ten-minute break) he is subject to investigation by a civil court, without regard to the 'criminal's' age or health, the lack of transportation facilities, or other unfavourable circumstances.

[1] Soviet sources have complained in recent years that (a) candidates for higher degrees fail to defend their dissertations within the stipulated time limit, e.g., in 1951 only 25 per cent of candidates in all Soviet institutions of higher education defended their dissertations; in the universities and law schools the percentage was even lower: 21 per cent (181 out of 862 candidates) and 12 per cent (9 out of 73), respectively. (Cf. *Vestnik vysshei shkoly*, No. 10 (1952), p. 38.) (b) Many professors and even directors of higher educational institutions do not have any higher degree, e.g., of 162 heads of social-science departments in Moscow institutions of higher education, only seventeen had doctorates or were professors; nine had no academic degree or rank at all. (Cf. *ibid.*, No. 12 (1952), p. 17; also No. 3 (1956) p. 7.)—Ed.

Many venerable teachers were charged with such 'crimes,' and, in the crude comedy of Soviet court procedure, were fined, according to all the rules of a court trial, 25 per cent of their salaries for a period of four months. Deans or directors of the college, or department heads, did not dare to overlook such 'crimes,' because of the existing laws, which punish those who cover up shirkers, and because of the many informers among Party activists.

In one provincial teachers' college, an older instructor died of a heart attack at the entrance to the lecture hall, clutching the door handle. He was already twenty minutes late, and had run all the way to the fifth floor (as a rule, the elevators didn't work). I cannot reveal his name, because his relatives are still living in the Soviet Union.

All students, whatever their special field of concentration, are required to attend courses in 'Principles of Marxism,' dialectical materialism (abbreviated '*diamat*'), historical materialism ('*istmat*'), History of the Communist Party ('*kompartiya*'), political economy, etc. They must sit in assigned seats, like pieces of furniture, and their attendance is closely checked. This subject is far from the doctrine which Marx taught a hundred years ago; it is, rather, a conglomeration of political information, newspaper reports, excerpts from Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, occasional political anecdotes, and excerpts from speeches of contemporary Bolshevik leaders—without any coherent structure. It is usually presented by non-intellectual Communist wind-bags. Compared to the specialised courses given by experts in their field, which form the basis of the young teacher's specialty, 'Principles of Marxism' is dull indeed. Students, even freshmen, can always tell real science and scholarship from Bolshevik phraseology.

No one takes notes in these courses, as they do in the specialised courses, because there is nothing sensible to record. Instead, the students write letters, make entries in their diaries, copy lecture notes of other courses—while giving the appearance that they are taking notes. If the lecturer asks a question, there is no point in answering; indeed it is positively dangerous to answer, as all the students are well aware.

If attendance were made voluntary, no one would come to the lectures on 'Principles of Marxism.' This is one reason why the Communist authorities do not permit voluntary attendance in any course.

III. Political Control

The so-called 'Party stratum'—members of the Communist Party and Komsomol—played a major role in the life of the college. Most of them, among the teaching staff, were inadequately trained,

having gone through Soviet higher educational institutions during the period before 1932, when Party membership and 'social and political activity' were put before academic achievement in determining who should graduate. The most fanatic of them came from the 'Institute of the Red Professoriate,' and taught in the department of the 'Principles of Marxism.' 'Bolshevik vigilance'—the eagerness to expose enemies of the people—was the chief motivation of their activity.

In the Herzen Teachers' College in Leningrad, in the school year 1937–38, an instructor at a seminar on principles of Marxism mentioned Trotsky as an open counter-revolutionary and enemy of the people. A naïve freshman asked, 'Isn't such a judgment concerning a leader of the early days of the Revolution a result of Comrade Stalin's personal attitude toward him?' There was an oppressive silence. The instructor took down the student's name. Shortly thereafter the student was expelled and arrested. This incident figured in the report of the department and was discussed in other teachers' colleges, as an example of Bolshevik vigilance.

In the department of literature of one of the provincial colleges (I think it was in the city of Molotov, formerly Perm) a model composition for seventh-grade students on the subject 'Where does my father work?' was given out. Additional questions were also given to bring out the child's ideas. (1) Where is the plant located? (2) What does it produce? (3) What is the horse-power of the motors? (4) Where are the finished goods sent? (5) How many workers are employed in the plant? etc. Members of the department of principles of Marxism, together with high-ranking Party members, discovered in this model composition—an inducement to espionage! The whole department of literature, including student teachers who had used these questions with their pupils, were arrested one night and disappeared into the depths of the NKVD. This case was discussed in the departments of literature in other teachers' colleges as an example of espionage plots by foreign spies.

A striking incident took place in the Tambov State Teachers' College in 1937. All the students had to give the notebooks which they had bought at the college's bookstall to the 'secret section' of the college, under receipt. On the covers of these ill-fated notebooks was a reproduction of Vasnetsov's famous painting of three legendary heroes. In the grass, near the hooves of the horses, one could, by turning the picture upside down, make out the words 'Down with VKP (b)' (All-Russian Communist Party [Bolshevik].) I saw this cover myself and was able to read the inscription by looking very closely. Perhaps it was not the engraver's fault; but, according to rumours, numerous arrests were made in the local print shop.

This 'secret section' of the college checked students' documents and the private affairs of instructors, as well as their references from previous positions. Denunciations and gossip of all kinds went through this section. The room of the secret section was isolated, with barred windows, and was sealed every evening, Communications could be made only through a little window. All the 'secrets' were kept in fire-proof filing cabinets.

The Tambov State Teachers' College had on its teaching staff the outstanding astronomer, Michael Klavdiyevich Parenago, now deceased. Once, while the students were working with slide rules, Parenago made the rounds of students' desks. He stopped at the desk of a brilliant student who was having trouble with a problem. Parenago took the slide rule from the student to do the problem himself, but it gave the wrong answer, even in his experienced hands. The old man was embarrassed, but he worked out the problem on the board with chalk. When it became obvious that the fault lay with the slide rule, Parenago became furious and blurted out: 'Some Stakhanovite made this, no doubt.' This seemingly insignificant remark was the subject of many discussions in the department, the dean's office, and the directors' offices. What saved Parenago was the fact that, at about this time, Yezhov, the head of the NKVD, was himself liquidated and the terror abated somewhat. Besides, the student who had been working on the problem denied that Parenago had said any such thing, and at least two witnesses were needed for a denunciation.

The numerous meetings and conferences are a great nuisance and burden for both teachers and students of a teachers' college. Several hours are wasted in such meetings almost every evening. A bare listing will give some idea of their number. There were general students' meetings, general faculty meetings, student 'production' meetings with faculty participation, departmental conferences, current events circles, meetings of 'voluntary' societies, meetings of scientific and academic circles, meetings for current campaigns (loans, jubilees), trade-union meetings, Komsomol and Party meetings, etc. Non-attendance at these meetings was considered 'academicism,' isolation from public life—the first step leading to counter-revolution.

The meetings were long and boring; the floor was held chiefly by Party wind-bags, who repeated themselves endlessly. This waste of time was especially unfortunate for freshmen, who were not used to working independently and needed the evening hours for their studies.

Independent student gatherings or parties outside the dormitories were not encouraged. In general, there is no friendship, no comrade-

ship among the young people; they all behave reticently and on guard.[1] Communism teaches that the interests of the state are above the interests of the individual. This results in encouragement of denunciations and betrayals, and prepares fertile soil for the lowest instincts: hatred, resentment, envy, etc. At any moment your best friend may betray you.

Sometimes betrayal by classmates took tragic form. Girls from the Krupskaya Teachers' College in Moscow were secretly attending spiritualist seances, where, with the aid of an overturned saucer, they summoned the spirits of great men and conversed with them. This absurd occupation had very unhappy consequences. Once they summoned the spirit of Lenin and asked his opinion of Stalin. The spirit answered that Stalin was a scoundrel. One of the youthful spiritualists reported this, and the affair became known. The girls were accused of counter-revolutionary propaganda under Article 58 of the Criminal Code. The defence counsel hired by the parents of the girls tried in vain to prove that from the materialist point of view spirits are non-existent and thus spiritualism is absurd. The girls were found guilty of spreading counter-revolutionary propaganda and were deprived of the right to continue their studies. Soviet 'justice' had been carried out. The sentence was appealed, but without success.

Imagine how a lecturer feels when, in the midst of his lecture, a stranger enters the lecture hall, sits down on a rear bench, looks around with an insolent expression, and begins making notes in his notebook, looking significantly at the lecturer. The lecturer's voice begins to tremble, his notes get mixed up, his well-prepared lecture goes to pieces. The students look bewildered, unable to grasp the logical connection of the material; time slowly drags on until the bell rings. The instructor begins to think—feels almost sure—that this stranger is a secret agent. He feels himself a condemned man, and mentally takes leave of his dear ones. But during the break it becomes clear that the stranger is a representative of the City Committee of the Communist Party, and that his notes did not mean anything. The lecturer feels an enormous relief, but he continues to spend sleepless nights from nervous tension.

IV. Admissions. Academic Requirements

Up until 1932 one could enter a higher educational institution without any examination. The committee on admissions was guided by the so-called 'class principle.' Applicants had to present a certificate testifying that they had had two years' experience in industry,

[1] For a contrasting report, see above, pp. 60, 66.—Ed.

or a two-year membership in the Komsomol or the Communist Party. (These certificates could be issued by any government department and certified by any plant or factory.) At that time, only children of workers and peasants were accepted; the higher educational institutions were closed to other elements of the population. Only an insignificant percentage of government employees and their children were admitted. The non-working-class people—merchants, priests, former officers and their children—were turned away with contempt.

Like many of my classmates in the Bubnov Leningrad State University (since renamed, Bubnov having been shot as an enemy of the people), I used false documents in order to continue my studies. It was easy to get 'counterfeit' documents testifying that you had worked in a certain plant for two years.

No secondary-school diploma was required for admission. Even certificates from a seven-year secondary school (there were no ten-year secondary schools then) were often 'counterfeit.' No examinations were required for graduation from the higher educational institutions. Diplomas were abolished, and solemnly burned in bonfires at Komsomol demonstrations. A brief statement to the effect that one had audited a course in such-and-such a year took its place; specific subjects were not even mentioned.

Marks and progress reports were given collectively by 'brigades,' not individually. One member of the brigade answered, and the whole brigade was given a grade. This was a symbol of 'collective intellectual labour.' The only grades given were 'satisfactory' and 'unsatisfactory,' without intermediate gradations. Academic degrees and the lecture system were abolished. Students took part in the administration of the schools, which in general were staffed by 'non-intellectuals.'

At the first session, the instructor distributed slips of paper on which the students were supposed to define the subject which they were about to study. Since the students were beginners who had no conception of the subject, how could they define it? Students were invited to ask questions of the instructor, in order to start a discussion. But what questions could they ask, when they had not even read a book on the subject? The lists of orders from teachers' colleges and universities contained such items as 'Expel so-and-so, a senior, for concealing his social origin as the son of a priest,' or 'son of a businessman, White officer,' etc.

At this time all students received scholarships, and there were many lazy and slovenly students. After 1932, conditions changed: the laboratory-brigade method was abolished, the lecture system reintroduced, along with strict competitive examinations and diploma

theses. Admission was no longer on the basis of 'social origin,' but even after 1932 Party members were accepted without examination.

The position of the teacher in those years was a humiliating one. A scholar of world-wide reputation, who had published numerous works in his field in Russian and foreign languages, had to attend the same political study group as the greenest freshman. Both were asked the same questions on current politics. To avoid unpleasantness, the scholar would say apologetically that he had not sufficiently 'worked over' the material—which consisted of about five short pages of illiterate Communist phraseology!

In the early period (until 1941) the student body of higher educational institutions consisted predominantly of men.[1] After 1941 the number of men decreased rapidly; in the teachers' colleges the student body was now made up almost entirely of women and the physically unfit. Physical handicaps were not considered an obstacle to becoming a teacher. Crippled, even blind students were admitted. In Leningrad, in the Herzen Teachers' College, there was a whole group of blind students. In the Tambov Institute there were students who crawled into the lecture hall because their legs were paralysed.

Entrants to teachers' colleges, as well as other higher educational institutions, must be between seventeen and thirty-six years of age. Few exceptions are made to this rule.

The abolition of scholarships for all students made it difficult for many students. Opportunities for part-time work were extremely limited; tutoring and other such work was not permitted. The only exception was anti-religious lecturing in various factories and plants, for which students were quite generously paid.

One positive feature of Soviet higher education is the complete absence of racial discrimination, which, under the Tsars, was deeply rooted in the school system. Not only is there no official discrimination against racial or national groups by committees on admissions and other educational authorities; the students themselves are remarkably free from racial and national prejudice. People of various races study side by side and feel no hostility or suspicion toward one another.

As one who studied for many years in a Soviet higher educational institution and later taught there for many years, I most categorically repudiate the statement that Soviet higher education was controlled by Jews. Hitler's theory of 'Jewish Communism,' is thoroughly false.

Soviet young people have a real aspiration for knowledge. Since, under Tsarist auspices, many minority groups were deprived of educational opportunity, especially the Jewish minority, they

[1] According to Soviet sources, during the late 1930s (up to 1941), women comprised at least 30 per cent of the student population.—Ed.

naturally gave full vent to their aspirations when the doors of educational institutions were opened to them. It should also be noted that, as a result of their ingenuity, intelligence, and perseverance, Jewish young people were able to survive better than others under Soviet conditions. But they provided their full share of the exiles, and inmates of prisons and concentration camps, in the Soviet Union.

Many talented young men and women from every nationality in the USSR, even those which were previously most backward, are now studying in the teachers' colleges. Each national republic has such a college. Whether the quality of the instruction is good or bad is another question. But the mere fact that higher educational institutions exist, where formerly there was not even literacy, is a sign of progress.

In higher educational institutions the 'Party stratum' is considerably larger than in other areas of Soviet life. Party members occupy all elective posts in students' organisations. All appointments are agreed upon in advance by higher Party authorities.

Members of the so-called 'triangle'—*komsorg* (Communist Youth leader), *partorg* (Communist Party leader) and *proforg* (trade-union leader)—are usually all members of the Party or of the Komsomol. As a rule, the non-Party people fear the members of the Communist Party and Komsomol and never speak frankly in their presence. A Party member in the family or in a student group is spoken of as a 'white crow.'

Instructors must grade Communist students as 'excellent' whether they deserve it or not. No instructor would dare give such students an 'unsatisfactory.' 'How could we deny the comrade's knowledge, when he is so active in public life?' is a typical question.

If a Soviet instructor wants to avoid criticism from the dean and does not want to be accused on the one hand of being too 'liberal,' and, on the other hand, of being too strict, he will follow the grade curve, which is an unwritten law among Soviet instructors. In a class of thirty-five students, he will give two or three 'excellents,' ten to fifteen 'goods,' and the rest 'average,' with one or two 'unsatisfactories.' He will be well advised to give the mark of 'excellent' to all Komsomol and Party members. This prescription was given to me in friendship by an older, more experienced colleague. 'Don't be carried away,' he said, 'don't mark too many as "excellent," and above all, God help you, don't make a blunder with members of the Party—they are very revengeful.'

In one of the metropolitan teachers' colleges a brilliant instructor once came down from the podium and asked a girl student who was sitting on a front bench, 'Do you understand anything of what I am saying? Your face looks as though you didn't understand a thing.'

Unfortunately, the student was a Party member. The Party did not forgive the teacher for this; he was 'fixed'—to use the Communist expression—accused of 'ideological misinterpretation of Marxism,' the usual accusation against an unwanted instructor. The poor man had to leave the college. Luckily, he got away easily. It is not a good idea to joke with Party members.

In order to characterise a Soviet higher educational institution, I will list the courses in geography at Leningrad State University (in the Faculty of Geology and Geography) which I took between 1930 and 1936. This list is taken, word for word, from my matriculation certificate.

List of Examinations

First Year
(1) History of the peoples of the USSR.
(2) History of Western Europe and America
(3) Political economy
(4) Museology
(5) German
(6) Photography and motion-picture technique

Practical work in the museum of socialist reconstruction of agriculture.

Second Year
(7) General chemistry
(8) General agriculture
(9) General geology
(10) Principles of industrial production
(11) German
(12) Mathematics
(13) Military discipline—marksmanship; tactics
(14) Agricultural soil science—practical work
(15) Agricultural soil science
(16) General theory of economic statistics
(17) Topography and geometry

Summer practice in geology. Field practice in soil science. Practice in topography. Military camp muster and examination for position of commander of rifle squad.

Third Year
(18) Technology and reconstruction of agriculture
(19) Military discipline—tactics
(20) Botany
(21) Natural geographical zones of the USSR
(22) Geomorphology
(23) Zoology of invertebrates

(24) Crystallography
(25) Mineralogy
(26) Climatology—principles of meteorology

Military camp muster. Examination for position of commander of a rifle platoon (junior lieutenant).

Fourth Year
(27) Field work in geology
(28) Historical geology
(29) Plant geography
(30) Paedagogy
(31) General hydrology
(32) Methodology of physical geography
(33) Determination of geographic coordinates
(34) General cartography
(35) Field work in geomorphology
(36) Petrography
(37) Oceanography (optional)
(38) Geomorphology of the USSR (European part)
(39) Physical geography of Soviet republics and regions
(40) Economic policy
(41) Geology of quaternary deposits
(42) Geomorphology of the USSR (Asiatic part)
(43) Leninism
(44) Geography of land masses

Diploma thesis and defence. State examinations.

This broad university curriculum is adulterated by subjects in the 'social-science cycle'—Leninism, etc., in which students are also required to take examinations. The optional courses are open to all students of a given faculty and are taught by outstanding specialists. Attendance at these courses, as well as at the examination, is voluntary. As a rule, these courses are always filled with auditors. In the Leningrad State University, in our department, we had lecturers of such world renown as the now deceased geographers L. S. Berg and U. M. Shokalski.

V. Military Training

The military courses mentioned above are included in the course of military reserve training. This type of training is restricted to universities and technical institutes; it is not included in the programme of teachers' colleges. The military course comprises about 1,000 hours of instruction and training. It includes the whole complex of subjects of the average commander—in a programme

somewhat reduced in comparison to that in the military schools—e.g., tactics, articles of war, drill, guard duty, military topography, staff duty, sanitation, marksmanship, coordination of various kinds of weapons.

After the first year of this military training, which is taken only by men eligible for combat service, the students have two months of field training. During this time they carry arms and wear uniforms. This training is carried out in conjunction with the regular army in the vicinity of the city. After that, they take an examination for the title of junior commanding officer.

Exceptionally high grades in the examination entitle the student to the military rank of platoon supply officer or first sergeant (an administrative position). After the second year of military study and field training the student takes examinations for the rank of platoon commander (junior lieutenant) in the infantry and receives his mobilisation orders. The whole military training programme is closely connected with the 'secret section' of the schools and universities.

Students who finish this military training are not automatically called to active service, except in wartime. Students in those higher educational institutions which do not have this system (including teachers' colleges) usually get deferred until the end of the academic course. Such institutions offer certain courses in military subjects, with required examinations and field training (marksmanship, topographic survey, drill). Military science departments in Soviet institutions of higher education are supplied with first-class books and equipment. Their teaching staffs include outstanding military specialists (in Leningrad University there was even an Army general).

VI. Conclusion

Before the War, Soviet young people had only the most confused and nebulous ideas about life outside the Soviet Union. Individual students were not permitted to send or receive books or letters from abroad. Even such an innocent pastime as stamp-collecting was discouraged by the NKVD, in order to cut off all ties with foreign countries. As a result of more than a quarter of a century of energetic propaganda, Soviet young people feel cut off and alienated from the West. They are concerned primarily with the bitter lot of their own people, a theme which is discussed in every family. Usually Tsarist Russia is taken as the standard of comparison. When Soviet troops saw how people really lived in the West, particularly in Germany, their faith in Soviet propaganda was badly shaken, and many young people experienced a deep psychological conflict.

TEACHERS' COLLEGES IN THE SOVIET UNION

Conditions of life in the Soviet Union are like a swamp which swallows up even those whose intentions are of the best. One must either perish or else keep silent and 'adjust' to Soviet reality. I can attest to this from my own experience. In 1937 a general meeting was held at Tambov State Teachers' College to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the October Revolution. The hall was filled to overflowing; the chandeliers were ablaze. A representative of each department gave a talk summarising the advances in his own field during the preceding twenty years. An astronomer was speaking. I awaited my turn in the wings. He concluded: 'We owe all of these accomplishments in astronomy to Comrade Stalin personally. All glory to him!' The hall thundered with applause, and the orchestra gave a resounding flourish. I entered, gave my talk, and—despite my hatred of the Soviet regime—in order not to spoil the effect, concluded as follows: 'Long live the great genius, leader of science, and first of geographers—Comrade Stalin!' I too was greeted with applause and a flourish. I could not have finished in any other way. 'If one would live with wolves,' as the old Russian proverb says, 'one must howl like a wolf.'

Today, with sadness, I read articles in *Pravda* written by former classmates of mine, now university professors, repeating the stale Communist charges about American imperialism and the 'sharks of Wall Street.'

My material wants were quite well supplied by the Soviet authorities. After the initial deprivations of student life (mitigated by a government scholarship), I graduated from Leningrad State University in 1936, at the age of twenty-two, and began to give my own lecture courses in Russian geography at a teachers' college, where I was well paid. I had, and still have, a real affection for Soviet students—stormy, for ever seeking, hungry for knowledge, who sit up till dawn over a textbook and then cheerfully listen to a lecture in the morning, absorbing, sponge-like, both the good and the bad.

But I found the intellectual atmosphere of Soviet schools suffocating. And although I must now earn my living as a manual labourer, although I have had to give up academic and scholarly work in my special field, I would rather do this than 'spit upon my own soul,' corrupting generations of Soviet young people with geography lectures which are saturated with Communist propaganda.

FACULTIES OF SPECIAL PURPOSE: ODESSA

by Alexander Miropolsky

I. Historical Background of the FON

THE Faculties of Special Purpose (*Fakul'tety Osobovo Naznacheniya*) or FONs, as they are called for short, were created late in 1931, as a sequel to Stalin's 'historic' speech at the meeting of Soviet factory managers held on June 23 of that year.

The difference between these faculties and the ordinary faculties of Soviet institutions of higher education lay in the fact that the students did not study in groups, but individually, not in lecture halls or classrooms, but at home, where outstanding professors and engineers with teaching experience came to give them lessons. The 'commanders of Soviet industry'—plant and factory managers and 'highly responsible' Party workers—formed the student body of this unusual institution of higher education. My own experience includes two and a half years as analyst and supervisor of teaching methods (*inspektor-metodist*) in the FON of the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry in Odessa.

Before describing the work of the FONs, it is necessary to give a short account of the years preceding their establishment, in order to determine the causes which led to the creation of this costly educational experiment.

During the first decade of the Revolution, the country had been hypnotised by the idea that, since all power had passed into the hands of the working class, this class could successfully cope with the tasks which the Revolution had laid upon it. But toward the end of the 1920s it became perfectly clear that the working class had not in fact been able to meet these demands. The short period of the NEP[1] demonstrated that, in the face of multifarious difficulties and

[1] Abbreviation for *Novaya ekonomicheskaya politika* (New Economic Policy). —Ed.

constant persecution on the part of Soviet authorities, the small entrepreneur still managed his factory or store in a more intelligent and efficient way than did government officials promoted from among the workers whose only qualification was a Party card.

The demands made by Stalin's programme of collectivisation and 'socialist construction' which got under way in 1929–31 were not met. The level of production remained low. Most industrial managers were men of little or no technical or academic training; those with degrees or certificates had 'earned' them chiefly on the basis of Party membership during the 1920s. A typical example of the educational level of such people is provided by the director of an educational combine, with a degree of economist-engineer (he had graduated from the Lugansky Co-operative Institute) who could not even calculate percentages—not to mention the fact that he made dreadful mistakes in spelling. He had graduated from the institute at a time when the examinations were carried out by the 'brigade' method, or, as it was called, 'in chorus.'

Under such circumstances there was no point in replacing the present industrial managers by other Party members who would have been equally incompetent. The alternative of filling such posts from among non-Party people, even those who had been trained in Soviet institutions, would have amounted to an admission of failure by the Party. Party leaders chose instead to retain the old untrained, largely illiterate Party members, but to make a large-scale attempt to raise their qualifications to the specialist level. In the eyes of the authorities, the members of this group had many valuable qualities; above all, they were well disciplined and trained to blind obedience. However, during the years when these ignorant, sluggish people had occupied important posts, they had become lazy, arrogant, conceited and inclined to overestimate greatly their meagre technical knowledge and experience. To correct this situation, drastic measures were needed—not a mere government decree, but a personal statement by Stalin. His speech was tantamount to an order, and was formulated in such a way that it could not be by-passed, nor its execution evaded.

Stalin laid down several propositions in categorical form, namely: ignorant industrial managers must be transformed into technicians and engineers ('Bolsheviks must become experts'); this must be achieved in the shortest possible time ('today knowledge is lacking; tomorrow it will be present'); this task must be fulfilled unconditionally ('we can do this, if we really want to' and 'there are no fortresses which Bolsheviks cannot storm', etc.); and, finally, it must be carried out 'at any cost.' The practical realisation of this task was entrusted to the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry, both

because of the central place of heavy industry in the general economy and because of the particularly grave shortcomings which were evident in its operations.

II. Organisation of Instruction

The Commissariat called in a group of professors from Moscow to lay down the fundamentals of the study programme for industrial managers. In justice to them it must be said that they did a very good job. They enumerated in detail what subjects the managers should study and how they should go about it. They stressed the need of explaining to the students, succinctly and clearly, the essence of the technological processes in their plants; the arrangement and working principles of machines and engines; the physical and chemical properties, and the varieties of raw materials used in production; the principles of the organisation of production techniques; the elements of planning and accounting with respect to raw materials and finished goods; supply and finance; estimates of production costs; and causes of bottlenecks and ways of eliminating them.

It was assumed that this would not take too much time, since (1) instruction would be given on an individual basis, (2) it was assumed that virtually all factory managers had a large fund of practical experience in their special field of production, (3)—most important of all—it was taken for granted that, as members of the Communist Party, the managers had a sufficient mastery of Marxian dialectics to be able to assimilate all the subjects in the programme quickly and successfully. It is hard to believe that there was not just a bit of carefully veiled sarcasm beneath these unctuous phrases in the Decree on FONs of the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry!

It was considered essential, in setting up individual plans of study for each student, to prepare a detailed description of his particular factory or plant with complete production data on raw materials, equipment, workshop division of production, packaging and shipment of finished goods. The teaching staff was to be recruited from among highly qualified specialists, including professors from various institutions of higher education and engineers with substantial experience both in industry and teaching. The time assigned for the completion of this course of individual training was from one to one and a half years.

The detailed descriptive reports, when completed, ran to thirty or forty pages, listing in great detail not only production data but also the kind and number of machines and equipment, their current state of maintenance and efficiency, etc. Raw materials—both primary and secondary—were minutely described: where and how they were

procured and in what quantities, where they were stored, and at what rate they were used. Diagrams showed the movement of raw materials, semi-finished and finished goods, and the time required for each operation. The disposition of workshops on the factory ground was described and criticised. Data were supplied covering transportation, inspection and quality control, output, packaging and dispatching of finished goods. More or less accurate estimates of the cost of production were given, together with prospects for future development according to the First Five-Year Plan. The more zealous inspectors even included in their reports an historical background of the factory, listing its previous owners, conscientiously comparing its past and present operations and making predictions for the future. Sometimes such comparisons were not favourable to the present: it appeared that under the Soviet regime production had decreased or had shifted from the manufacture of complex articles to the manufacture of simpler ones.

These reports, of course, soon came to the attention of the NKVD. As a result, the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry issued directives to curtail those sections of the reports which dealt with historical background and plans for future development. It also ordered the elimination of any statistical data which might be useful for espionage purposes. Later memoranda stipulated that designations and trade-marks of machines and tools should also be omitted, as well as figures on their power, performance, etc. Estimates of production cost, raw materials charts, data giving percentages of finished goods, rejections, and raw material losses, were also eliminated. It is hard to guess how far this process might have gone, but in fact, this stream of increasingly restrictive memoranda resulted in the setting up of a 'model' report.

By this time the reports had become so bare and general that one of my colleagues jokingly drew up a report that could be applied equally well to any plant—a steel foundry, a chocolate factory, or a ladies' hosiery plant. Instead of specific designations, figures, and percentages, he used the terms 'appropriate,' 'necessary,' 'planned,' etc. Thus, the raw materials were received from 'appropriate' sources and distributed to 'appropriate' shops; they went through the 'necessary' manufacturing processes, and their quantities were fixed 'according to the production plan.' Production was carried out 'according to the directives issued.' In short, the whole thing was a caricature, and we treated it as such. But the director of the FON, a half-educated engineer, happening upon it, declared it a 'model' report, and sent it to the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry, where, to everyone's amazement, it was actually approved and distributed to all FONs as a 'model' for them to follow.

These reports, of course, were merely the basis upon which the individual plans of studies were to be set up. These plans specified what subjects each student was to study, taking into account his experience and previous training. As I have said, the full course of studies was to take no more than a year and a half; and a certain amount of work was assigned for each month. Special study plans were prepared for particular enterprises, as well as for individual students, stipulating what technical knowledge was needed by the manager of a given factory. For instance, the manager of a particular farm-implement factory (consisting of shops for casting, forging, cold-rolling and assembly) was supposed to be familiar with metallurgy (properties of metals and alloys, methods of preparation and working, measures against rusting and corrosion); hot and cold working of iron; hammers and presses, metal-working machines; strength of materials; and calculation of stresses. He was also supposed to be familiar with safety measures and devices, proper work distribution, operation and maintenance of motor-driven tools, work estimates, technical standardisation, and estimates of production costs.

Booklets were prepared, one on each subject, by experienced engineers; they were written in clear, concise language and illustrated with tables, charts, and diagrams, suitable for independent study. Two hours of study were planned each day, for a six-day week, a total of forty-eight hours per month. The 'academic' year was nine months—the other three months being set aside for vacations, special Party meetings, etc., since most of the students held important Party positions—which made a total of 432 hours for the year. Furthermore, all of these hours were devoted to individual instruction, in private rooms, without the danger of interruption or distraction.

The various disciplines and the number of hours assigned to each may be seen from the following table:

Subject	*Number of Hours*
Mechanical drawing	60
Principles of accounting and planning	50
Organisation of production	50
Safety measures	24
Technology of production	200
	384

The remaining forty-eight hours were devoted to physics and chemistry, as needed, or added, as a 'special course,' to the course on technology of production, bringing the latter to a total of 248 hours.

III. Disappointing Results of Programme

Obviously, an engineer cannot be trained in 384 hours, even of private instruction; but in such a period it would seem quite possible to raise the technical qualifications of an executive with practical experience in a given industry. Yet despite this careful and conscientious preliminary work, the project turned out to be completely impracticable, within the stipulated time limits, for at least 60 per cent of the students—principally because the previous formal education of the students was grossly overestimated. In part, at least, this was a result of sheer misunderstandings. Application forms contained no space for detailed listing of schools attended, or numbers of years of schooling. The applicant had only to underline one of the three words: 'elementary,' 'secondary,' or 'higher' to characterise his education. Most students underlined 'secondary,' but it turned out that they did not know exactly what the term meant.[1] Many of them seemed to assume that it meant 'average' or 'fair-to-middling.' For example, one applicant characterised himself as 'not illiterate, but not so very literate either; about six of one and half a dozen of the other.' In fact, most of the students were semiliterate, if not illiterate. Some of them could do no more than sign their name or scribble abbreviated instructions, such as 'to ch. eng.' Many of them could not divide, and could multiply only by adding, as illiterate people often do. Between 60 and 70 per cent of the students fell into this category; a minority had completed three years of elementary school; very few had had more formal education than this.

Under these circumstances, there was no point in attempting to begin with the technology of production, or even elementary physics. Russian grammar and arithmetic had to be tackled first; students had to be taught how to use textbooks or simple technical manuals and how to take lecture notes. Further complications were introduced by the discovery that most of the students had had their practical experience in fields other than the one in which they were supposed to be acting as managers.

In consequence, study plans were revised; the 'special courses' were postponed pending completion of what was euphemistically called a 'preparatory course.' But it soon became evident that the time allotted to arithmetic and Russian grammar in the 'preparatory course' was insufficient. Students failed to do their homework, pleading lack of time, but a check established that the real reason was their inability and unwillingness to work independently. Usually instruction was carried out in the mornings, at the students' homes;

[1] The Russian word for 'secondary' (*srednyi*) means literally 'middle' or 'average.'—Ed.

they were give special permission to come to their place of work two or three hours late. Breakfast was usually served during the lesson. As analyst and supervisor of teaching methods, I had to attend at least one lesson of each student, and I was amazed at the luxury of the breakfasts as compared to the fare of ordinary Soviet citizens, especially in the Ukraine during the famine years of the early 1930s.

Most students avoided working in their offices, not only to escape interruptions, but also because they were ashamed to admit what they were studying. Typical is the answer of one factory manager who, upon being asked what he was studying, replied 'mathematics,' quickly adding, 'the highest, of course.'

Whenever a teacher announced that his student needed additional hours for the 'preparatory course' the educational section was thrown into despair for fear the 'decree of the Government and Party' would not be complied with. Everyone, but particularly the Party leaders in the FON, knew what that would mean. Obviously, an inspector had to exercise great caution in approving an increase in the number of hours. Yet in most cases it was clear that the additional time was really necessary, as the students were often failing to make any progress at all. Despite the excellent pay, many teachers threw up their jobs as tutors of such dull students, feeling that money could not compensate them for their shattered nerves.

IV. The Student Body

It was hard to understand why such illiterate and stupid people were assigned as managers of large factories, especially in such a sensitive area of the economy as heavy industry. Was the Party really *that* limited in its choice? Similar positions, in smaller enterprises, were held by more competent men, who took their studies more seriously. Managers of tile factories, confectionery plants, or canneries could often boast of five or even seven years of schooling. A clue to this strange situation was offered by the students themselves. From conversations after lectures and information volunteered by students concerning their colleagues, one could piece together the following picture:

Party members who had rendered 'special' services to the Party and Soviet government in the GPU-NKVD were rewarded, upon their retirement, with appointments to important positions in industry, positions which held great opportunities for advancement and at the same time guaranteed a very comfortable living. Ordinary Party members, on the other hand, were appointed to more modest positions with fewer privileges—and also fewer opportunities for

'*blat*.'[1] This last group included many different types: some were clever, some mediocre, some educated, some illiterate. But, for the most part, they were people who had reached high positions as a result of their own shrewdness.

Besides factory managers and assistant managers, FON students included certain 'responsible' Party officials: secretaries of provincial, regional, or municipal Party committees, heads of sections of propaganda and agitation, etc. Such people clearly had no immediate need of FON 'special courses'; in order to justify their presence in the programme, FON officials incorporated in their study plan a course in 'general technology,' with a view to their eventual transfer to industrial management. However, no indication was given as to what this 'general technology' should cover; we had to concoct on the spot a kind of descriptive survey of various branches of technology. Our outlines of such a survey course were forwarded to FON headquarters and were published in the *Bulletin* of the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry, complete with the errors which had been introduced in retyping. Evidently no one at FON headquarters had bothered to read the course outline, knowing as they did that these 'highly responsible' Party officials were in no need of a course on 'general technology,' but very much needed to acquire some general elementary education.

At first we were under the impression that, although managerial posts went to illiterate Party members, responsible Party positions were reserved for people with more education. But we soon learned that this was not the case.

In many cases, FON facilities were used not only by the Party officials assigned as students but also by their families. (This practice, though not strictly legal, was widespread and generally condoned.) For instance, V., secretary of the Provincial Committee, sent his fourteen-year-old son and fifteen-year-old daughter for individual FON instruction at Party expense. This was quite a drain on the provincial budget, as the children studied six hours a day, ten months out of the year—in other words, took a full secondary-school programme. Since the cost of instruction was 7·50 roubles per hour, tuition for each child ran to about 11,500 roubles a year.[2] Wives of responsible officials also studied in FON courses; they were 'entitled,' by custom, to half-courses (three hours daily) at the expense of the Party or factory, but often they actually took more than this. Such students were classified as belonging to 'Group X'; there were always twelve or fourteen of them and they came and went according

[1] A Soviet slang expression meaning, roughly, 'pull'—primarily through influential friends or relatives, but also by means of bribery or connivance.—Ed.

[2] I.e., nearly three times the annual wage of an average Soviet worker.—Ed.

to changes in their husbands' (or fathers') assignments. Once a husband and wife, both enrolled as students, were absent from a scheduled lesson—they had been shot a few minutes prior to the arrival of the instructor and supervisor. The NKVD officials in the apartment declared, with grim humour, that that day's lesson would be postponed 'for very important reasons.'

The students' progress was recorded on special forms which had been carefully worked out by the office of the FON educational director. These forms showed not only what was being taught in class but also homework assignments, time spent on these assignments by students, grades for each lesson, and monthly ratings. One day the FON director decided to have a look at the ratings of one of the 'highly responsible officials' among our students. He was amazed to find the student's record dotted with grades of 'unsatisfactory' and 'poor.' After inspecting the records of other 'highly responsible' students, the director clutched his head in despair. They exhibited a monotonous uniformity of poor grades. Although the Director did not dare order the instructors to change the grades, he could not possibly let the records stand. He decided to have the report-forms changed, so that instead of detailed reports of grades they would show only graphs giving the 'percentage of fulfilment of the plan.'

As a consequence of repeated complaints on the part of instructors about the dullness of their students, we decided to conduct a 'controlled experiment.' A set of arithmetic problems was given to fifth-grade pupils and then to FON students, at the appropriate stage of their training in the subject. The school children solved the problems readily in ten to twenty minutes; out of fifty-eight pupils, only eight, i.e. 14 per cent, gave incorrect answers or were unable to solve the problems. In the case of the FON students the results were just the reverse: only 20 per cent were able to solve the problems readily; the rest were unable to solve them, or required help from their instructors. Furthermore, they were allowed twice as long for the test as were the school children. Needless to say, the results of this 'experiment' were not published, nor were they communicated to the FON director. Such findings might easily have been interpreted as an attempt to discredit the Party.

An elaborate set of tests, based—in a general way—on American models, was devised by Boridnisman, Director of the All-Ukrainian Industrial Academy in Kharkov (this was the title of the Kharkov FON which was supposed to unite all the FONs of the various People's Commissariats in that area). The tests, worked up by a task force of experienced teachers, headed by the director personally, were intended to determine the student's 'inner profile.' Tests were

devised to establish counting skill, attentiveness, judgment, memory, ability to concentrate, and even will-power. This last the students called an 'honesty test.' It was conducted as follows: the student was handed an unsealed envelope of heavy blue paper and the key to a room, in which he was to remain for five minutes without opening the envelope. Before he entered the room an identical envelope containing a sheet of white paper was opened in front of him. The student was instructed to underline on the envelope either the words 'did not open' or 'opened,' and to cross out the other. What the students were *not* told was that inside each envelope was a small piece of photo-sensitive paper which changed colour when the envelope was opened.

The results of these tests exceeded all expectations. It appeared that three-fourths of the high Party officials were slow and clumsy in thinking, had poor memories, and could not carry out simple tasks precisely and accurately. In a word, they were what most Soviet educational theorists would have called 'mentally retarded.' But the results of the 'will-power' test were the most interesting of all. Every single student tested, from ordinary factory managers to People's Commissars and members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine, *opened* the envelope and then underlined the words 'did not open'!

During the scoring of these tests someone, probably one of the non-Party teachers engaged in the work, let the cat out of the bag. The results of the tests soon became general knowledge, and the director had to report the whole affair to the authorities. According to the story as it was told to me by one of the teachers in the academy, the non-Party teachers who had worked on the tests were declared 'enemies of the people' and sent to 'far-off places.' The director was treated with relative leniency: he was transferred to Odessa as shop manager of a small dilapidated factory which manufactured cheap iron beds. I know for a fact that the director was discharged and the teaching staff was broken up at this time.

By the end of the first year of FON operation, it was absolutely clear that the programmes set up could not be carried out within a year and a half, or, for that matter, within several years. During the first year, most students received only elementary instruction and did not even start the 'special course.' Among a majority of students, absenteeism was widespread; less than half the assigned class hours were actually used. Students offered various excuses and pretexts, but the main reason was their unwillingness to devote themselves to serious study.

On the other hand, about one-third of the students, those who had some educational background, made real progress. They took their

studies seriously, missed lessons only in real emergencies, and often informed teachers when they were going to be absent—a courtesy conspicuously lacking among the 'responsible' students. Sometimes they even did more than the assigned amount of homework. Many of them, at their own request, had their study plans altered to include physics, chemistry, algebra, and trigonometry. These students impressed the instructors very favourably; we seemed to see them growing intellectually before our very eyes. They enlarged their vocabularies and began to ply their instructors with questions on subjects which they had never thought about before. Lessons with them were lively and interesting, in marked contrast to the dull and laborious sessions with the 'responsible' students, who were merely discharging what was to them an unpleasant obligation.

V. Revision of Plans. The Tekhminimum

At the end of the academic year a conference was organised at which all the students and teachers of the FON were present. The speakers unanimously praised Stalin's 'genius' and reported that the Party's plan had been fulfilled by 100 per cent. In fact the FON secretary juggled the figures so skilfully that the plan appeared to have been not only fulfilled but overfulfilled in every respect. A similar appraisal of FON activities was given in the *Bulletin* of the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry. But those of us who were on the spot knew perfectly well that these were only empty words, and that in fact barely one-third of the students had made any real progress.

FON officials in Moscow, it appeared, were aware of the true situation. When one of them visited our FON office in Odessa—ostensibly on a survey tour, but actually to spend a vacation at a health resort—we cautiously expressed the opinion that the preliminary descriptive reports on particular factories were a superfluous luxury, since at least half of the students could not meet the requirements based on these reports, either in the stipulated time period or in an indefinite period. We also added that the plans for the 'special course' were quite unrealistic, that it had not yet progressed beyond the paper-planning stage, and that the entire first year and perhaps more should be devoted to elementary instruction. We also made some comments about the lack of enthusiasm or even interest on the part of most students.

The Moscow official heard us out calmly, expressing no surprise, and replied that he was aware of these things and that the situation was no different in other areas. It was clear to everyone, he said, and, of course, to the Central Committee, that the first year of the plan had been wasted. But this was of no great concern; the important

thing, he stressed, was that old, deserving Party members who had been threatened with replacement would now be able to keep their jobs—and that this programme demonstrated the Party's concern for its working-class members. Furthermore, he added, the programme was attracting attention abroad. He mentioned this last point as if in passing, but it was evident that this was far from the least important consideration when this costly project was launched.

That FON headquarters in Moscow was aware of the true state of affairs was also evident from the fact that the triumphant official proclamations were soon followed by modest requests for changes in the goals of the study programme. Starting with the new school year, the programme was to aim at achieving a *tekhminimum* (minimum of technical or technological knowledge). The new programme, at first sight, appeared to have changed nothing except the name, *tekhminimum* instead of technology. But in fact the study plan was considerably modified, not only in scope, but also in aim and methods.

To begin with, the descriptive reports of specific factories were replaced by a general 'profile.' The reports had been prepared locally and each one applied to one particular factory or plant; the profiles were prepared in Moscow and applied to all factories or plants of a given type (e.g. cement plants). The requirements listed in the profile were divided into two categories: what a factory manager should 'know' and what he should 'be able to do.' The first was formulated in vague and nebulous language: the manager 'should have an idea of . . .,' 'should have a general notion of . . .,' etc. In effect, all the requirement meant was that the student should have some 'general conception' of the various subjects listed. The second category of requirements was stated somewhat more specifically: the manager should be able to set up Stakhanovite work methods, organise socialist competition, control production, etc.

With these new and more modest goals, it was no longer necessary to provide extensive lecture courses on the technology of production, to prepare study plans, or even to worry about the 'liquidation of illiteracy.' Highly qualified expert lecturers were no longer required; one could employ the services of a larger number of lecturers who were less distinguished but also less expensive. The services of one engineer, who in a comparatively short time could explain to a factory manager the technology of production in his plant so that the latter would 'have an idea' of the 'general principles' of the work in his factory, would be sufficient. With regard to machinery, it was literally stated in the profile that the manager should have a 'general idea' of the working principles and functions of each machine. Such a requirement was easy to meet, since it is hard to

imagine a manager who, going through his plant every day and hearing an engineer's explanations, would not, in a month or two, learn something about the functions of the various machines.

Since fewer hours were needed to achieve the *tekhminimum* and since the expenses were correspondingly smaller, the list of people entitled to individual studies was extended to include foremen, warehouse managers, and even heads of special sections (NKVD representatives in the factories), who were not directly connected with production. As the number of students increased, the network of FONs expanded. FONs of Light Industry, Local Industry, Water Transport, Rail Transport, etc., were created. There were even FONs for managers of producers' and consumers' cooperatives.

'Achievement of a *tekhminimum*' was something more tangible, something that could be more easily exploited for practical and propaganda purposes, than the former 'mastery of technology.' The previous results had been camouflaged in percentages, but managers who had failed the elementary arithmetic course now passed their *tekhminimum* examinations with the grade of 'excellent.' The examining committees were headed by professors or by engineers with city-wide reputations, who asked only simple and perfunctory questions, considering, quite rightly, that there was no need to regard this well-paid performance as a genuine examination. The *Bulletins* of the various People's Commissariats carried frequent reports on achievements in the educational field, supported not by mere percentages, but by real numbers of persons who had passed the 'compulsory government examination for the *tekhminimum*.'

Thus the original idea, which, if unrealisable, was at least worthwhile—the idea of raising semiliterate factory managers to the level of specialists—was turned into a vulgar farce legalised by the authorities.

How, in the end, did the Soviet government meet the need for technically trained factory managers? As time went by, industry developed, new factories were built, the old ones were transformed into combines, and auxiliary enterprises grew up around established plants. Complex equipment which required special knowledge for its care was imported from abroad. The responsibilities of the managers increased, but their technical knowledge remained at the same level. The Soviet government quietly solved this problem in the following manner: chief engineers were given the privileges and responsibilities of deputy managers. Non-Party engineers were vigorously recruited into the Party. Sometimes the invitation to join was formulated as an ultimatum, and a refusal was interpreted as a counter-revolutionary action. As the years passed, the standards for students, including Party members, were raised. The old 'brigade' examinations were

eliminated, defence of technical theses or projects was reintroduced as a requirement for graduation, and it became increasingly difficult to 'slide through' the universities and technical schools. Recovering from a long decade during which old teaching methods had been discarded and new ones 'forged,' the universities and technical schools now settled down and began to turn out fully qualified experts. Moreover, the percentage of Party members among the graduates began to increase.

Thus, by 1934–35 the chief engineer of a factory, in his capacity as deputy manager, was no longer the defenceless non-Party scapegoat upon whom the manager could lay the blame for everything that went wrong; he was now a trained expert and a Party member with sufficient authority to force the manager to modify his orders on occasion. Later, during the purges of 1936–38, most of the Bolshevik managers were liquidated and replaced by new people, a majority of whom were qualified experts and graduates of universities or technical schools. Soviet factories and other industrial concerns, at least the larger ones, are no longer managed by 'highly responsible' semiliterates, as was the case previously, but by technically trained, energetic, and able younger men. This fact should not be forgotten, although the Russian émigré press still tends to regard all Soviet factory managers as complete ignoramuses, on the model of the early Soviet 'commanders of industry,' whose technical training and experience had been acquired chiefly in the torture-chambers of the Cheka.[1]

VI. Appraisal of the FON Programme

What, we may ask, has been the cost of this experiment, and was this cost in any degree justified by resulting improvements in the organisation of production, lowered costs, or improved quality of product? As to the first question: since the cost of one FON lesson (including teacher's salary, administrative expenses, social security payment, and tax for 'cultural' purposes) was 7·50 roubles for general subjects and 12·50 roubles, on the average, for specialised subjects, and since each student received an average of 300 hours per year (twice as much time being spent on specialised as on general subjects), the total annual cost per student averaged 3,250 roubles. In fact, the actual cost—at least during the first few years of the FON programme—was closer to 3,500 roubles.

For obvious reasons, the total number of FON students was not

[1] Abbreviation for *Vserossiiskaya chrezvychainaya komissiya po borbe s kontrrevolyutsiei, sabotazhem i spekulyatsiei* (All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for the Suppression of Counter-Revolution, Sabotage, and Speculation), forerunner of the OGPU and NKVD.—Ed.

disclosed by the Soviet authorities. But one can make a fairly accurate estimate on the basis of the figures for an industrial centre like Odessa, in which I worked. The various Odessa FONs—for Heavy Industry, Local Industry, Food Industry, Rail Transport, Water Transport, Producers' and Consumers' Cooperatives, Disabled Veterans' Cooperatives, etc.—had a total of from 100 to 150 students annually (perhaps as many as 700 or 800 during the whole FON programme). The cost of the FON programme in Odessa thus amounted to between 350,000 and 525,000 roubles per year. There are about twelve cities in the USSR of approximately the same size as Odessa—industrial centres with a population of between 500,000 and 800,000—not counting Moscow and Leningrad, where the number of students was larger, since, in addition to factory managers, responsible officials of the People's Commissariats and central Party organs were included. Smaller cities like Gor'ki and Astrakhan, of which there are thirty or forty, also had their Institutes for Industrial Managers and their Industrial Academies. Thus the total cost of this programme must have been well over five million roubles per year, perhaps closer to ten million.

To the second part of the question—as to whether the high cost of studies was justified by the practical results achieved in the field of production—the answer is negative. Despite the large number of industrial managers who attended the courses, the special qualifications of managers were improved in barely 40 per cent of the cases. The rest only raised their general educational level slightly. Naturally, the fact that this category of managers learned how to count and how to write with fewer mistakes was a positive feature, but it can scarcely be said that such an 'achievement' justified the expense involved in the FON study plan.

With regard to people who really raised their standards, it should be said that under other than Soviet conditions their studies would have been favourably reflected in the management of their concerns. But under the Soviet regime this was not possible, since Party members were transferred from one job to another without taking into account their special qualifications or knowledge. Thus the director of a candy factory who, after two years of intensive study had become thoroughly familiar with the production of his plant, was 'promoted' to the post of manager of a garment factory, or vice versa.

In the later years of the programme, some of the FONs were renamed 'Institutes' (e.g., 'Institute of Industrial Managers of the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry,' 'Institute of Special Industries'). In some cities the FONs were absorbed by the newly founded industrial academies; in others the two continued to exist

side by side. The student body was expanded to include Stakhanovites from various branches of industry and agriculture, celebrated milkmaids and much-decorated shepherds, various 'initiators of victories' and 'pioneers of socialist achievements,' whom Stalin had recommended for advancement to high posts. But as it proved impossible to organise individual instruction in remote kolkhozes and sovkhozes, living quarters were provided for these students near the Industrial Academies. Their regular occupations were interrupted for the period of their studies (as had not been the case in the FONs), and instruction was given in a mixed form, including both individual and group instruction. As a result, the training of factory managers merged with that of the various Stakhanovites and 'rising workers.' In 1937 this training lost its 'special' and privileged form of individual lessons given at home and became assimilated to the ordinary institutional forms of the Soviet educational system.

FACULTIES OF SPECIAL PURPOSE: TADZHIKISTAN

by Ivan Rossianin

DURING the academic year 1936–37 I became a member of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Special Purpose (FON) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Tadzhikistan. Our task was to raise the general educational level of the principal Party and government officials in the area. Similar organisations existed in every republic of the Soviet Union; there was even an FON affiliated with the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow. The Tadzhikistan FON staff included specialists in various fields, from scientists and engineers to dancing instructors! Instruction was given in the students' homes at irregular times, usually in the evening or on Sundays; sometimes an official whom I was teaching would send his car to pick me up quite late at night.

FON work was surrounded by the strictest secrecy. Teachers were permitted to say that they worked for FON, but they were required to keep the level of their students' knowledge, and the rate of their progress, completely secret. Before I began my work, Ivanov, the FON Director of the Tadzhikistan Central Committee, made me sign a pledge of secrecy. I did know that other teachers were engaged in similar 'secret' work: among them were a professor of philology at the Morris Institute, who taught English, and a woman professor in the same department who taught Russian. She used to complain to me about the deplorable spelling of her Tadzhik students. I met these people at the homes of my students; but I never spoke to any outsider about my work.

The lessons were conducted on a strictly individual basis, but the programme as a whole was supervised and 'controlled' by the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Tadzhikistan Party Central Committee. Careful record was kept of the date and subject of each lesson, together with the student's signature, attesting that he had received the lesson in question. In fact, however, these records were

not very trustworthy: sometimes when a student did not feel like studying he would simply sign the list as having received one or more hours of instruction, and he and the instructor would go their separate ways.

My subject of instruction was world geography, and my students included Babokolanov, an old Bolshevik and a Tadzhik, People's Commissar of Agriculture of the Tadzhik Republic; Gafurov, also a Tadzhik, Chief of the Press Division of the Tadzhik Party Central Committee; Yevseyev, a Russian, Director of Teachers' Training Schools in Tadzhikistan; Nazykov, a Tadzhik, Head of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation of the Central Committee.

The work was not organised; there was no set plan of studies. I was simply expected to provide general geographical information on any country that happened to catch my students' interest. Babokolanov was particularly interested in the geography of Spain, because of the Spanish Civil War, but in the midst of such discussions he would suddenly switch to questions about Afghanistan.

It soon became evident to me that my students, all of whom were prominent in Party and government circles, lacked not only training in geography but any kind of formal education. Their general cultural level was extremely low. Even Yevseyev, who was a graduate of the Institute of the Red Professoriate in Moscow, had a very poor knowledge of geography. But their lack of education did not prevent these people from making speeches at all sorts of meetings and conferences, and many of these speeches were subsequently published in the local newspapers.

I soon discovered too that these men, who held responsible positions in the government and Party apparatus of the Tadzhik Republic, were largely figureheads. Lacking training and experience, they discharged their duties by means of 'Party instinct' and the selection of more or less competent subordinates—very few of whom, by the way, were Tadzhik (most of them being Russians or Jews). The officials themselves did little more than sign papers. During the 1930s the whole Soviet directorial pyramid was built on such 'principles'; the majority of the high officials were ignorant and uneducated men.

People's Commissar of Agriculture Babokolanov used to sit on the floor and take off his shoes; then I would spread out a map and coach him in geography. Such instruction could not by any stretch of the imagination be called a course of study; nevertheless, some of the information which I gave him found its way into print—in the columns of *Kommunist Tadzhikistana* [The Tadzhikistan Communist]. in an account of a talk which the Commissar had given at a Party meeting.

I was paid at the highest rate authorised, that for a professor: twenty-two and a half roubles an hour. The work was burdensome and exacting. At this time I was not particularly interested in the money, but I felt that it would be unwise to refuse FON work. Close association with powerful and highly-placed people offered a kind of political insurance against the mischances of Soviet life which academic people like myself could ill afford to forego.

TEACHERS' TRAINING SCHOOLS IN KIRGIZIA

by M. Pavlov

I. Introduction

THE Kirgiz Soviet Socialist Republic, which borders on China, lies at a distance of some thousands of miles from European Russia. The town of Przheval'sk (formerly Karakol), site of the first Kirgiz teachers' training school, at which I taught Russian language and literature for three years, is located near one of the world's largest mountain lakes, hundreds of miles from the nearest railroad. To reach this remote region one must ride for many miles on camel-back.

The outlying districts of Przheval'sk give the appearance of villages, with their characteristic rush-thatched bungalows, fenced about with clay walls, their windows facing upon a small courtyard. Here the streets are quiet. The central part of the town, however, with its administration buildings, marketplace, shops, schools, library, museum, and common, is fairly animated. Graceful poplars shade the irrigation ditches which flow along both sides of the streets carrying water from the snowy summits of the great Tien Shan mountain range and its highest peak, Khan Tengri—'King of the Spirits.'

The population is mostly Kirgiz, but there are also Ukrainians, Russians, Germans, Tatars, Uzbeks, Dungans, and many other nationalities. The Kirgiz themselves are Moslems; they venerate the *Shariat*[1] and follow its laws, but adhere even more closely to the *Adat*, the national code of customary law and ethics.

II. The Teachers' Training School at Przheval'sk

The teachers' training school[2] which was set up in Przheval'sk in 1928 occupied a two-story building. There were ten large classrooms,

[1] 'Holy law', i.e., Moslem moral and religious code.—Ed.

[2] The Soviet teachers' training school (*pedagogicheskii tekhnikum*) trains elementary-school teachers; secondary-school teachers are trained in a teachers' college (*pedagogicheskii institut*).—Ed.

equipped with visual aids for chemistry, biology, physics, and mathematics, a few pieces of apparatus, textbooks, and manuals. There was also a library, which consisted mainly of Russian classics in the Russian language and a few books and journals on teaching methods and educational theory. Propaganda literature was represented by two or three hundred pamphlets and the programmes of the Communist Party and Komsomol.

The laboratories were pitiful. A few dirty zoological charts, a half-broken demountable model of the human body, and a few badly assembled herbariums was all the biology room possessed. The chemistry laboratory had only glass beakers, test tubes, a small supply of reagents for experiments, and tables of Mendeleyev's periodic law. The physics laboratory had a few charts relating to the main branches of physics, mechanics, electricity, heat, and optics—and a few old non-functioning models.

The school's director, Pyotr Ivanovich Cherbayev, a Mordvinian, was a Party member and former Deputy People's Commissar of Education of the Kirgiz ASSR.[1] He had not completed his secondary education, but he could speak Kirgiz and was a fairly good organiser and administrator. He took almost no part in organising the School Council, but confined himself to issuing political directives at conferences or general meetings. He was away most of the time in the villages on extended Party assignments, carrying out directives of the Soviet government: organising kolkhozes, getting in the harvest, preparing and carrying out spring sowing campaigns. Occasionally, when he was in town to report to the Party district committee, Cherbayev stopped at the school for a few hours, held a students' meeting, talked with the secretary of the Komsomol cell, and, in passing, exchanged a few words with his deputy and the teachers, before starting off for the country again.

The school was actually run by the deputy director in charge of instruction, a non-Party man with a higher education and a knowledge of teaching methods and educational theory. However, his command of the Kirgiz language was shaky, so that he sometimes had to call upon the Kirgiz language teacher to act as interpreter.

Classes were conducted in Russian. The administrative and teaching staff consisted of eleven persons; of these, three had graduated from universities or teachers' colleges, one had attended the university but had not graduated, four had graduated from secondary schools, and three had not even finished secondary school.

As to nationality, there were seven Russians, one Mordvinian,

[1] 'Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.' The status of Kirgizia was changed in 1936 to 'Soviet Socialist Republic,' thus bringing it fully within the Soviet Union.—Ed.

one Tatar, one Uzbek, one German—and no Kirgiz. Only two members of the staff had Party affiliation. In addition to the director himself, who taught the history of class struggle, there was a Party candidate (the Uzbek), who taught chemistry, biology, and 'political orientation' (*politgramota*).

The majority of the instructors tried to do their work honestly and conscientiously, although in their hearts they hated the Soviet regime. Some of the teachers lacked a thorough knowledge of their subject, but they tried to fill this lack by reading and studying professional literature. This they received in generous quantities, free of charge, from teachers' colleges in Moscow and Leningrad which offered correspondence courses. They also subscribed to periodicals on teaching methods and read them eagerly.

It cannot be said that relations among the instructors were marked by either warmth or directness, but staff members always helped one another as much as they could. A constant wariness, a fear of being suspected of disloyalty to the Soviet regime and thus finding oneself in trouble with the law, led to a reserved, uncommunicative attitude among the teachers. Their wariness became especially noticeable when the Uzbek Party candidate entered the teachers' common room. His aggressive manner, his exaggerated self-confidence, rudeness, and boastfulness, his readiness to teach those from whom he ought to be learning, were distasteful to all. He affected a youthful swagger (he was twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old) and always went around with newspapers in his hands and Party slogans on his lips. This did not inspire confidence, especially as the teachers knew him to be an opportunist, intent on reaching a high position and unscrupulous enough to use any means—informing on others, lies and slander—to achieve his ends. In his presence even the most harmless non-political conversation died down, and everyone tried to appear absorbed in something else—correcting students' papers or reading professional magazines or books.

This Uzbek spoke Kirgiz. In the director's absence he managed the Komsomol cell and tried to find out the instructors' political views from student Komsomol members, encouraging them to turn informers. As a result, many students became suspicious of their teachers and sometimes lost confidence in them.

Teachers were expected to fill their lectures with 'positive examples' from the life of Soviet Kirgizia or the Soviet Union, illustrating and affirming the beauty of life in the Soviet Union, the wisdom of the Communist Party and the genius of its leader, Comrade Stalin, and, on the other hand, the awful horror of life under the Tsars or the shocking destitution and poverty reigning in the capitalist world. Often these far-fetched examples bewildered the students or produced

ironical smiles, because the students were aware of the instructor's desire to ensure himself against any possible accusation of 'apolitical' treatment of his subject, and because the students knew that the Soviet 'measures' enacted under their eyes led to hunger, want and loss of rights. Only a few gullible students accepted these stories of their own 'happy life' uncritically.

Teachers were greatly worried for fear they would let slip some word or phrase which could be construed as a 'sociological deviation.' Fresh in every teacher's memory was the fate of a teacher of Russian language and literature at Frunze Teachers' College who for a simple slip of the tongue—he said 'gentlemen' instead of 'comrades'—not only was discharged within twenty-four hours but, as an 'enemy of the people' who had 'unlawfully wormed his way into the college,' was arrested, tried, and deported to Siberian concentration camps for five years.

At the beginning of the academic year 1930–31 the school had 206 students, distributed approximately as follows:

Junior preparatory course	95 (three groups)
Senior preparatory course	56 (two groups)
First year	38 (two groups)
Second year	17

Of the total, about seventy (34 per cent) were women.

The students, most of whom had been recruited in the villages or had been assigned to the school by Komsomol organisations, were a heterogeneous mixture with respect to previous training, appearance, and nationality. Over 50 per cent were Kirgiz; about 30 per cent were Russians and Ukrainians; the remaining 20 per cent included Uzbeks, Dungans, Uigurs, and Kara-Kalpaks.

The Kirgiz village schools offered a very poor preparation for work in teachers' training schools. Gross illiteracy in the Kirgiz language and total ignorance of the Russian language and of arithmetic made it impossible for their 'graduates' to pursue the course of studies in the teachers' training school. The reasons for this may be summarised as follows:

First, the village teachers not only lacked special teachers' training; they usually had finished only two or three years of elementary school. Hastily graduated from a three- or six-month preparatory course for rural teachers, they were able at best to impart the rudiments of an elementary education.

Second, rural schools had no equipment, neither books, nor copybooks, nor pencils. The pupils wrote with chalk on a blackboard, and in a few rare cases on slates, but without the teacher's correcting their mistakes.

Third, at this time (the late 1920s) the 'project method' was widely used in Soviet schools. In Kirgizia this amounted to a large-scale participation of children in agricultural work, to the detriment of their academic studies. In effect, child labour replaced education.

I had occasion to visit a number of rural schools, and they made a very painful impression: abject poverty and filth; cold, unheated buildings; low attendance; terrible hygienic conditions. Many schools had no tables, no desks: the children sat on the dirty floor. The teachers were untidy, incompetent, and unable to explain to the children even what little they knew. Such 'schools' bore only a remote resemblance to what is normally understood by the word.

Kirgiz urban schools were somewhat better off than the rural schools with respect to teaching staff and students, as well as to the availability of textbooks and equipment. But even here the ubiquitous 'project method' had its destructive effect.

Students of the teachers' training school were supposed to have graduated from a seven-year school, but since there were no seven-year schools in the villages, almost all of the students came from urban schools. In these schools, Kirgiz pupils were in a minority; thus, though the teachers' training school was intended to train Kirgiz teachers, the Kirgiz were a minority of the total student body during the early years.

In an attempt to bridge this gap in the flow of trained Kirgiz teachers, preparatory courses [junior and senior] were added to the school programme. In these courses, students studied the Kirgiz and Russian languages, arithmetic, and a certain amount of advanced mathematics (geometry, algebra, trigonometry). The distribution of classes was as follows:

Kirgiz language	2 hours a day
Russian language, literature, and reading	3 hours a day
Mathematics	1 hour a day
Political orientation	2 hours per week

These preparatory courses served their purpose; after two years of such study, Kirgiz or other non-Russian students were able to use Russian textbooks and manuals. At that time textbooks had not been produced in other languages.

Student 'mortality' ran as high as 50 or 60 per cent, especially in the preparatory courses. Those who dropped out of the preparatory courses either returned to their villages to work in the kolkhozes or on their own homesteads, or found employment in town. Their labour was always in demand.

Many young people tried to avoid becoming teachers, and seized

the first opportunity to slip out of the teachers' training school. A teacher, especially a rural teacher, was an 'honoured' person only in the Party texts. In reality, rural teachers were subordinated to the kolkhoz chairmen and local authorities, who saddled them with an intolerable burden of 'public activity.' And teachers received a beggarly salary.

Students who came to the teachers' training school from the country were permitted to live in the school dormitory. Twenty to twenty-five people slept in one room on wooden cots with straw mattresses and bed linen of doubtful cleanliness. Besides the cots, there were one or two tables, two or three wooden stools, and nothing else. The noise and confusion of discussions, quarrels, and horseplay made working in the dormitories impossible. The students had to do their homework in the classrooms or in the school library. However, more often than not it was impossible to keep the students within the walls of the school once the lectures and the frugal dinner were over. They preferred to rush to the market place, the favourite gathering place of the natives, where one might meet relatives or friends, have a drink of *buza* (alcoholic beverage made of millet or rice) or of kumiss, chat with people and hear news from one's native village, or listen to the *akyn*—the folk poet, singer and story-teller. The *akyn*s wandered from village to village, from nomad camp to camp, carrying to the people their songs—now melancholy, romantic, imbued with the glory of epic heroes, now gay and amusing, now wrathful, summoning the people to revolt against their oppressors.

In general, the students lived together without undue friction, with only sporadic personal quarrels. A certain dislike of Tatars and Uzbeks could be felt but it did not take an acute form. There was mistrust, and sometimes actual hatred, of the Russians, who symbolised the Soviet power in Kirgizia. Petty theft was common among the students and was not regarded as a vice but rather as a dashing exploit. It cost the school council no little effort to destroy the glamour attached to that form of heroism.

Sometimes, though very seldom, there were fights due to love affairs. The students ranged in age from sixteen to twenty-four. About fifty Kirgiz girls lived in the dormitory, and Kirgiz girls of fifteen or sixteen are quite mature. According to the dormitory rules, all students were supposed to be in bed, with the lights out, by eleven o'clock. Once, while making the rounds, the director happened to notice that one of the cots was empty; a student's sheepskin coat was rolled up under the blanket to simulate a person sleeping. The director decided to check all the beds and found that some thirty students were missing. To his question as to where they might be, the remaining 'sleepy' students replied as one man that they did not

know; they hadn't seen anybody leave. Perhaps the others had gone straight home to their villages from the marketplace. . . . The director went to the girls' rooms, turned on the lights and, to his astonishment, found the thirty men students lying in the girls' beds. There was a general uproar, someone turned off the lights, there was a rush toward the open door, and, when the lights were finally turned on again, not a single male student was left in the room. All of them were back in their own cots, feigning sleep. During the next few days, there were dozens of meetings of the Komsomol *aktiv*, the general Komsomol membership, and the student body. It was decided to have an instructor on duty at the dormitory from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m., with the right to enter both the boys' and girls' rooms for bed-check. At the same time, a doctor was invited to give a series of lectures on sex and hygiene. By the middle of the academic year these combined measures began to show results: students began sleeping in their own beds.

At first, student relations were marked by frankness and mutual confidence; there were no betrayals. But after a few months, several students were arrested and taken away, and many others were 'grilled' by the local NKVD. For a long time the students puzzled their heads over the reason for this. Finally it became known that these happenings were the result of the activities of the Uzbek Party candidate. 'Educating' the students in the 'true Communist spirit,' he had incited them against one another with promises and threats —of expulsion from both the Komsomol and the school, and even of exile to a concentration camp. By the end of the second year all frankness and solidarity among the students had disappeared. The student body became divided into a frightened, apprehensive, close-mouthed majority, and a careerist minority. The old Kirgiz way of life, shaped by the *Adat*, was crumbling.

In spite of the increase in the number of schools, and the tremendous increase in enrolment during the late 1920s,[1] there was a catastrophic drop in the quality of instruction. One of the main reasons for this was the notorious 'project method' which replaced classroom instruction. Each 'brigade' of seven or eight pupils was headed by a 'brigadier,' whose duty it was to supervise his fellow students' work. The teacher was relegated to a secondary position. There was no fixed curriculum, no regular textbooks. School work was reduced to carrying out certain projects, usually of the type, 'Let's help our factory fill the plan,' or 'Let's help the kolkhoz bring in the harvest.' Following orders from above, the School Council

[1] From the 255 schools with 17,000 pupils, in existence in 1923, the school system, by the beginning of the academic year 1931–32, had grown to 1,019 schools with a total of nearly 120,000 pupils, 70,000 of whom were Kirgiz.

selected a project; then each instructor had to prepare study material pertinent to the theme of the project. For instance, the literature teacher was required to choose several poems and stories describing factory life or the rural scene. The physics teacher had to conduct a field trip to the factory, with the help of the factory engineer, to explain the manufacturing processes to the students, and, if necessary, to remain at the factory to help remove litter and rubbish. The mathematics teachers was supposed to acquaint the students with the important role of mathematics in industry, or to calculate how much time is spent on the manufacture of this or that item.

Having given a class or group the theme or sub-theme and a summary explanation of how the 'squads' should work, the teacher usually went to the next classroom, leaving the squad leader or the brigadier as his substitute. In the other classes the procedure was repeated. Each brigadier gathered his brigade around him and 'organised the work.' Usually this 'organising' consisted of talk and laughter, with occasional fights or horseplay, since the teacher was busy distributing assignments to other groups and came into the room only occasionally to supervise the work or, more often, simply strolled up and down the corridor beyond the open classroom doors, trying not to interfere with the 'students' independent efforts.' A few days later, the teacher would call on a brigade member to report and would then note in his classbook: 'Brigade number X has mastered the subject.' Whereupon students and teacher would start off on a field-trip or a campaign to 'fight the enemies of agriculture,' i.e., to exterminate moles, rabbits, mice, etc.

When brigades, following orders from Moscow and Frunze, went out on 'projects' to the kolkhozes and sovkhozes, studies were interrupted for a week or two. Sometimes, when only selected groups went, minimal activity continued at the school. Most often the students were sent to the sovkhoz opium poppy fields, some thirty or forty kilometres from the town. Work in the fields was organised by brigades and squads, each having an 'attached' teacher to whom the sovkhoz specialist issued 'assignments.' The students weeded the fields, made incisions in poppy-heads, gathered raw opium, dug potatoes, or picked apples.

Under such conditions, students naturally fell behind in their academic work. Nevertheless they did learn something. Graduates of the teachers' training school were far superior to the average village teacher.

Fortunately, the programme allotted a generous number of hours to the study of teaching methods and to practice-teaching. These practice lessons took place at town and village schools, in the presence of the teacher of paedagogics and of the best teachers of the municipal

primary schools. Each practice lesson was always carefully discussed afterwards. Mistakes were pointed out in great detail; attention was given to the way the student teacher conducted himself and spoke, and to the way the lesson had been planned. Alternative ways of presenting the same subject matter were discussed. By the time a student graduated he knew how to use books, his mental outlook had been broadened, and his clothes and personal appearance could set a certain standard to be imitated, so that he was able to become a real *muhalim* (teacher) in some Kirgiz village. Thus the pressing problem of training native cadres was being solved, at least in part.

Despite the obvious drawbacks of the project and brigade methods, Soviet authorities continued for many years to insist that these methods had been 'socialistically tested and practically proven.' Parents were indignant but silent; teachers, bowing to the orders from above, threw up their hands in helpless perplexity. Some of them attempted to criticise the method but were rebuked by local political leaders for their 'bourgeois ideology'—and subsequently kept quiet. The students, sensing the helplessness of both teachers and parents, became arrogant, undisciplined, and rowdy.

Then, on August 25, 1931, Soviet newspapers published a resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party denouncing all of these educational experiments as 'leftist deviation.' On September 5, 1932, the Central Committee issued a decree restoring 'class lessons as the basic form of instruction'; re-establishing the teacher's position of leadership; reintroducing classes in place of groups, brigades, and squads, textbooks as the basic school aid, and a strict schedule; and introducing discipline, up to and including expulsion from school. In truth, the Central Committee now exalted what it had long been noisily repudiating.

Mad confusion broke out all along the line. Yesterday's champions of the project method of instruction were now branded as leftists, deviationists, and Trotskyites. Teachers were caught up in a flurry of meetings, conferences, debates, and consultations. Stunned by the confused chatter of these meetings, they tried to behave like Saltykov-Shchedrin's wise old carp, avoiding both 'the crayfish's pincer and the pike's gullet.' Up to the autumn of 1934 the schools stood at a crossroads. It was not until the academic year 1934–35 that 'stabilised' plans of instruction were sent down to the local schools, with detailed curricula giving the exact number of hours of instruction per subject per grade. Teachers were now required to 'explain their subjects systematically and keep a record of the students' progress.'

The project method had done irreparable harm to all educational institutions. The majority of students who had graduated from

primary and secondary schools between 1929 and 1935 were semi-literate. But they could not all be sent back to the classrooms and lecture halls. The various short refresher courses for teachers were inadequate. It is true that the schools of Kirgizia, as a result of the remoteness of the country, the backwardness of the population, and the limited but real autonomy enjoyed by the territory, had not carried their 'enthusiasm' for the project method to the ridiculous lengths characteristic of the more 'advanced' schools in the European part of the Soviet Union.

III. The Training of Kirgiz Specialists

The training of technicians and specialists—or, in Soviet parlance, the 'preparation of cadres'—for such regions as Kirgizia, was carried out according to two distinct plans: (1) raising the level of general literacy and then setting up a large number of occupational courses in various educational institutions; and (2) training 'executive' cadres for provincial and district establishments. This, in turn, was done in two ways: (*a*) by setting up *rabfaks*[1] and by assigning workers to study at the Tashkent or Moscow Communist Universities for Workers of the East, or (*b*) through practical 'on-the-job' training, i.e., appointing an illiterate or semiliterate, but Communist-minded, Kirgiz as assistant director of an office or factory, or even deputy People's Commissar, and letting him learn the art of leadership as he worked.

The *rabfaks* and the Communist Universities in Tashkent and especially in Moscow were not an unqualified success in this regard. A Kirgiz, transplanted to Moscow and severed from his customary way of life, soon found himself unable to stand the strain of mental effort and the routine of intellectual pursuits. Halfway through the academic year, Kirgiz students would begin to miss classes on the pretext of headaches and to seek ways and means of 'completing' their studies as quickly as possible. Having acquired a smattering of Marxist wisdom, they pleaded an assortment of illnesses and returned to Kirgizia to fill responsible Party posts. Even those Kirgiz students who worked hard and were marked by genuine intellectual curiosity seldom managed to complete as much as three years at an institution of higher education away from home. They often became genuinely ill from overexertion and undernourishment; in many cases they contracted tuberculosis and had to leave school a short time before graduation. Sometimes up to 70 or 80 per cent of the students would drop out. Thus the Party was faced with the necessity of opening higher educational institutions and trade schools in the

[1] See above, p. 39, footnote 1.

Kirgiz Republic itself, where the students would be able to live and work in familiar surroundings.

Specialists were badly needed in Kirgizia, but there was an attitude of veiled hostility toward non-Kirgiz specialists, who were regarded as representatives of the Moscow regime. Mistrust, animosity, and injured national pride often came to the surface. Now and then a tremendous clamour would arise in the press. Non-Kirgiz specialists were transferred, discharged, or brought to trial, and natives were appointed or promoted to take their places. When the new appointees proved unable to cope with their duties, they in turn were prosecuted as enemies of the people, and specialists of other nationalities were again invited, more or less unofficially.

The first institution of higher learning in Kirgizia, the Kirgiz State Teachers' College, was opened in 1927, in the city of Frunze (formerly Pishpek), the capital of Kirgizia. It played an important part in the education and refresher-training of teachers, both for the schools and for the numerous special courses. In the period 1928–33, the number of specialists in various fields who graduated from or were attending training schools, courses, and higher educational institutions exceeded 10,000.

IV. Political Indoctrination

Whereas the traditional Kirgiz *mekteb* (elementary school) and *medresse* (secondary school of religious education) required students to learn religious texts by heart and did not offer any general subjects, religious instruction was forbidden by law in the new schools, and general education, along with political and anti-religious propaganda, was given first place. The students' curricular and extracurricular life was organised in such a way as to destroy the habitual Kirgiz conception of human and social relationships and to establish new relationships, based on the idea of class struggle and on 'exposing the reactionary role' of religion in society. Informing on friends, acquaintances, and parents; bribery, intimidation, and provocation —all were used to destroy the cementing power of the *Shariat*, the unwritten ethical precepts of the *Adat*, and Kirgiz customs and traditions generally.

In particular, the traditional Kirgiz family structure, with its strong ties and patriarchal relationships, came into conflict with the 'education of builders of socialism' by Party, Komsomol, and Pioneer organisations. Moral problems and problems of personal relationships were solved in a direct and simple mathematical manner. What strengthens the Soviet regime is good; what weakens it is bad. Therefore, from the point of view of Communist education, it is 'a

question of honour, an act of valour and heroism' for a Pioneer or Komsomol member to turn in his own father, mother, brother, sister, or anyone who voices dissatisfaction with or disapproval of the Soviet regime. Pavlik Morozov, the twelve-year-old Pioneer who denounced his own father as an 'enemy of the people,' thus dooming him to death, was widely praised and held up as an example for all young Soviet citizens, including Kirgiz young people, to emulate.

After the Pioneers, the Komsomol organisation is the next step in the life of a Kirgiz youth. Membership in the Komsomol opens the doors to the core of the Soviet apparatus. If a Komsomol member has been successfully active in 'community work,' i.e., if he has helped to fulfil the five-year plan, stamp out the kulaks, close the churches, and get Moslem priests and other 'public enemies' arrested, or has betrayed his friends and cast off his parents, then he is an 'activist,' and the Komsomol committee secretary will give him good references. Thanks to these, he soon becomes a Party candidate and enjoys all kinds of privileges, from shopping at exclusive 'distribution centres' and going to resort stations and rest homes to receiving appointments to important posts.

About 60 per cent of the students at the teachers' training school were Komsomol members. Not all, but some of them were proud of their Komsomol cards. The card justified an overbearing manner and provided careerists with a footing. Komsomol members were the first to be entrusted with 'responsible' tasks or to be chosen to take part in the various political campaigns. It was harder to be strict with them about their school work than it was with non-Party students. Komsomol members sometimes rudely retorted when questioned about homework: 'I didn't have time to study. I was busy on an important assignment.'

Some of the instructors replied that 'The most important "responsible" work of a student is to study, and if you are a Komsomol member you must study better than others and be an example.' Other instructors, sparing their nerves and mindful of their own security, said only, 'Very well, I will call on you next time.'

Occasionally, complaints about an exacting teacher were taken to general Komsomol meetings. There, under the benevolent eye of the Uzbek Party candidate, the Komsomol students vented their feelings against the teachers without restraint. However, teachers who were firmly entrenched behind a Marxist-Stalinist vocabulary were generally immune to such resentment.

Once, however, the Komsomol organisation succeeded in getting a teacher dismissed. He was a highly gifted man of about fifty-five, with a university education in medicine and in mathematics, who

absolutely refused to accept 'missions,' 'community work' and other such duties as a valid excuse for neglecting school work. When a student refused to recite, he gave him a failing mark and a reprimand: 'This is a school, not a kolkhoz. We are trying to make specialists out of you. For that you must have knowledge, not a faked degree.'

The Komsomol members demanded that this 'arrogant' teacher be dismissed; the school council did everything in its power to protect him, but the director, wishing to avoid conflict with the Komsomol and fearing that the Uzbek, supported by the Komsomol members, might lodge a complaint against him with the Kirgiz Commissariat of Education, gave in to the students. The teacher was dismissed in the middle of the academic year. The rest of us teachers were exceedingly sorry to part with him. We saw him off quietly, and cautiously.

There were various study groups and 'circles' in the school, but they afforded little incentive or opportunity for students to further their knowledge. Usually only the first 'organisational' meeting received any publicity. Having joined, the students hardly every attended the subsequent sessions—which meant that the circles did not actually function as such. Instead, they served for tutoring those students who were behind in their class work. For example, students who were failing in physics would receive additional instruction at the 'Physics Circle,' either from their teacher or from the better students. However, students did not come very regularly—although they always agreed to come, saying '*Makul, makul*' (Very well, very well')—and when they came they didn't pay much attention. On the other hand, the instructors were glad to come, both to help their students and to reduce the number of failures in their own classes.

Attendance was better at the military circles, since students were compelled to join these: the PVKhO[1] and GTO[2]. They were under the direction of a company commander. Marching, target practice, infantry regulations, and first aid (for wounds, shell shock, and poisoning) were the main subjects. Sessions were held twice a month, and attendance was compulsory, just as for classes.

The students were also expected to take part in the *subbotniki*,[3] or, more accurately, *voskresniki*.[4] On Sunday, or some other school holiday, all the students and teachers had to assemble in front of the school and march, with banners and slogan-placards, to a factory or

[1] Abbreviation for *Protivozdushnaya i khimicheskaya oborona* (Anti-Aircraft and Chemical Defence).—Ed.

[2] See above, footnote 2, p. 75.

[3] Literally, 'Saturdays,' i.e., unpaid labour, 'voluntarily' given to the state, usually on days off or as overtime.—Ed.

[4] Literally, 'Sundays'.—Ed.

Kolkhoz where they spent the day working without pay. Nobody liked to do this—neither those who belonged to the Party nor those who didn't, neither boys nor girls, neither teachers nor administration; but all came, out of fear—outwardly energetic and cheerful, inwardly cursing the system. In the evening they were too exhausted to do homework. It was understood, unofficially of course, that after a *voskresnik* the teachers would be lenient about homework.

V. 'Socialist Competition' in Kirgiz Schools

In the thirties a new kind of pressure began to make itself felt in the Party's control of education—socialist competition and shock work. This method, extended by government order from factories to schools, did nothing but harm to the schools, leading to increased lying and deceit between teachers and students and offering limitless opportunities for cheating.

The question of 'challenging another school to socialist competition' was usually 'raised' on the 'initiative' of the Komsomol at a general students' meeting. The meeting infallibly resolved to work out a plan and challenge school X to compete for a '100 per cent passing record.' The general meeting was followed by class meetings, at which 'concrete proposals' were made. Actually, these 'proposals' were sent to all schools by the higher authorities in a circular entitled 'A Sample Plan for Socialist Competition in Educational Institutions.' These 'proposals' then went to a committee on socialist competition, which drew up a general agreement for the school. The committee usually included the director or his deputy in charge of instruction, a representative from the local trade-union committee and the secretary of the Komsomol cell. The school pledged itself to strive for 100 per cent attendance, 100 per cent passing grades, 100 per cent student participation in group and circle activities; to challenge school X to compete in achieving these goals; and, to check on the progress of the project every two months.

When the agreement had been 'ratified' at a general meeting and a 'committee to conclude and supervise the agreement' had been chosen, the committee visited the school to be challenged. That school had also held meetings about 'challenging the neighbouring school to a competition' and had worked out agreement clauses. New meetings were called to discuss clauses and 'counterclauses'; 'challenges to inter-class, inter-group and individual competition' were agreed upon. Instructors competed with each other in bringing their students to a 100 per cent passing record, pledging themselves to give ten (or twenty) extra lectures, hold remedial sessions for backward students (two or three times a week), attend ten to fifteen classes of other teachers—both at their own and at the competing

school—and 'profit by their experience'—in the case of non-Kirgiz teachers, learning Kirgiz by the end of the year; in the case of Kirgiz teachers, learning Russian, and so forth.

All this was painfully belaboured, with much paper work, cerebration, and discussion. But none of the students took it seriously. At the end of the first month a preliminary check disclosed that the school was falling behind its rivals at an alarming rate. Concrete suggestions were put forward: 'Post the results of the competition on a bulletin-board'; 'list the poor students on a black board and the good ones on a red board.' But nothing helped.

Under the slogan 'all backward students in tow!' open season was declared on laggards. They were threatened, begged, ordered to 'hold on to the towline,' that is, to attend the remedial sessions. When all measures directed at the students failed, attention was turned to the teachers. The school director called individual instructors to his office and suggested that they were being too severe in evaluating their students' work and were not taking sufficient interest in the students' problems.

The interview ended on the director's advice, 'Go and think it over; maybe you'll be able to organise your work better—like some of our fine teachers who manage to have no failures in their classes.' The teacher left the office feeling crushed and helpless, and soon began to 'organise his work,' i.e., to come to terms with his conscience, for he knew that if he let the school down his own fate was sealed. Both the teacher and the school administration knew that he was getting enmeshed in a terrible lie. But that is not something one can discuss in the 'freest country in the world.'

In the end, 'due to timely measures,' the percentage of passing students had risen to something like ninety or ninety-three. At the end of the semester or trimester the committee went to the other school to check on their record. But at that school exactly the same thing had been happening. Their percentage of passing students had been artificially inflated, everything had been 'thoroughly attended to' in the same way; everybody knew perfectly well what the real situation was, and everybody kept silent.

Deceit permeates the school system from top to bottom. At the end of the year the final results are summed up, the winners receive prizes and the leading schools are rewarded with a red banner to hold until the next competition. Many schools achieve a 95, 98, or even 100 per cent record of passing students. In actual fact, the percentage of passing students did not exceed fifty or fifty-five. And the whole programme of socialist competition deflected the energies of teachers and students into channels which had little to do with education.

In these troubled waters student careerists and 'activists' found a rich haul. Speaking from morning till night at meetings and conferences, they 'exposed' the teachers and demanded the right to make their own way in life. Lazy and ignorant, but armed with 'Party and government directives,' they completely terrorised those teachers who took their work seriously and in their hearts suffered more than anybody for the disintegrating school and for the youth of the land.

In fairness to the good students in Soviet universities and secondary schools it must be said that they worked at their studies with devotion and with the intellectual curiosity natural to youth. These 'agreements' and outside obligations only hindered their honest effort. In time they became excellent teachers, doctor, engineers, agronomists.

The 'wall newspaper' was hated and resented by everyone as a Party organ of propaganda. Its main contents were write-ups of revolutionary holidays, glorification of the Party and the government, reports on socialist competition, and denunciations formulated under such titles as 'Put the Wise Guys in Their Place,' 'A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing,' and 'An Alien Element.' The last section of the paper reported the experiences and exploits of outstanding Soviet citizens. The articles were collected with great difficulty; indeed, they were wrung from the students, who regarded preparing them as an onerous duty. An exception was provided by the 'fishers in troubled waters,' who, if they did not write articles themselves, incited cowards or other careerists of their own ilk to defamation and denunciation. At times, when savage terror swept the country, the wall newspaper 'actively participated.' It smeared and defamed students and instructors and ferreted out 'social origins.' Fortunately, however, 'informers' material' did not appear in the paper frequently, since it came from the school's 'activists,' who, in order not to reveal themselves, would look for some 'blockhead' to sign the articles which they sent to the paper. For instance, when the mathematics teacher was dismissed from the Przheval'sk teachers' training school, the Uzbek Party candidate hid behind a certain Metaliyev, a second-year student who was a good-for-nothing and loafer, an 'extorter of good marks,' as the students called him, and an 'activist.' The Uzbek got Metaliyev to write an article for the wall newspaper and confined himself to 'editing' it.

VI. Anti-Religious Agitation

Anti-religious education is another of the weighty cudgels used to stupefy the young minds of schoolchildren. During the early Soviet period religious persecution in Kirgizia did not reach the monstrous

scale which it assumed in the central republics, but during the collectivisation period, i.e., in 1929–33, Kirgizia 'caught up with and surpassed' the rest of the Soviet Union in the cruelty of the methods of repression directed against the mosques and the Moslem clergy. Mosques were transformed into warehouses, clubs, or movie theatres, and sometimes torn down. Mullahs (Moslem priests) were deported to concentration camps or executed. Kirgiz young people, as Pioneer and Komsomol members—incited and led by Party members and directives from the central authorities—took a considerable part in this far-reaching and vicious anti-religious campaign among their own people.

In the Kirgiz schools, including teachers' training schools, this 'work' was organised in the following way: First, at an executive meeting of the Komsomol cell, the question was brought up of 'assisting the Party and the government in the fight against the opium of religion.' Naturally, the decisions had been dictated from above. At this same meeting plans were laid for a general Komsomol meeting, and roles were assigned among the activists, i.e., it was decided who should address the general meeting, who should make a motion, etc. Usually no one spoke at Komsomol meetings except the activists and presidium members. The general meeting 'confirmed' the resolution adopted at the executive meeting.

A campaign was then launched in the wall newspaper. Demonstrations were planned for Moslem and Christian holidays, in which all pupils and teachers were to join. The teachers were instructed by the school administration and by the Komsomol leaders to persuade all the students to take part in the demonstration. The Pioneers also held rallies and conferences with their leaders, who were, as a rule, Komsomol bureau members. While explaining the necessity of a 100 per cent attendance at the demonstration, the Pioneer leader tried to sound out the tendencies of the Pioneers' parents. Of course, some 'Pavlik Morozovs' will always be found. In the Aksuisk and the Dzhetyogussk rural schools two Pioneers, thirteen and fourteen years old, told the leader that their fathers forced them to say prayers at sunrise and sunset, although they, the Pioneers, did not want to, and that their fathers were against collectivisation. Three days later these hapless fathers were arrested and tried. One of them, Sydykvekov, was deported for five years, the other, Bayalikov, for seven years, to concentration camps in the Far North.

Once the young people had been 'processed' at Pioneer gatherings, Komsomol meetings and class 'conferences,' a meeting of the whole school was called. Again decisions were made, resolutions were adopted, and invariably a 'socialist competition for 100 per cent attendance at the demonstration by all students' was announced.

Usually those taking part in the demonstration gathered in front of the school on some major religious holiday and marched to the church or mosque so as to arrive at the beginning of the service of worship. They carried lighted torches and banners with atheistic and blasphemous slogans, and such 'demands' as:

'We ask that the mosque [or church] be closed.'

'Religion is the opium of the people.'

'[Russian Orthodox] priests and mullahs are our enemies.'

'We demand that priests and mullahs be tried in court,'

The frightened and helpless worshippers would creep into the church or mosque, hiding their faces in kerchiefs or behind veils, while the 'demonstrators' shouted, whistled, and hooted in the street. After a while, a speaker from the district agitation and propaganda committee of the Party, or the Komsomol secretary, would appear on the scene and, pointing at the house of worship and shouting blasphemies, would say in effect, 'We beg the Party and the government to accede to the wishes of the young builders of socialism and close the churches and try the clergy as enemies of the people.' Then a notorious 'activist' would step out of the crowd and make a speech 'on behalf of all the demonstrators,' supporting the 'preceding comrade' and demanding that the mosque be closed and the clergy tried. The noisy, rowdy demonstrators would then return to the school, singing anti-religious songs or songs of devotion to 'our father, leader and teacher, Comrade Stalin.'

The next day signatures would be collected on a petition to close the mosque or make the building available for a Komsomol club. This 'popular wish' would soon be granted, whereupon ikons were thrown out and burned, church bells smashed, a red flag raised, and the mosque or church proclaimed a club. A few days later propaganda literature would be brought in, an accordion or harmonica rounded up, and 'an amateur night' held. But in a few more days, the 'club' would be deserted. Even the 'activists' rarely put in an appearance.

It should be said that, in spite of repressions and intimidation, in spite of the closing and tearing down of the mosques, the Party was not able to kill the religious and moral beliefs and attitudes of the Kirgiz people. The generation which was twenty to twenty-five years old at the time of the suppression of religion remained religious.

But the younger people, the school-age group, were effectively estranged from religion. The Pioneers and the Komsomol members, as a rule, are atheists. The whole system of socio-political pressure, from kindergarten and children's homes to the Pioneer and Komsomol units in the schools, has been aimed at imbuing the young with a morality of hatred which destroys their minds and hearts. All the

publications for children and adolescents, such as the all-Union organs *Pionerskaya pravda* [Pioneers' Truth] and *Komsomol'skaya pravda* [Komsomol Truth], and their Kirgiz counterparts, *Krasnyi pioner* [Red Pioneer] and *Krasnyi komsomolets* [Red Komsomol Member]; anti-religious literature; propagandistic works such as Yakovlev's *Pavlik Morozov*—all these work toward a single end, to poison the lives and minds of the young people and undermine their ideals and aspirations. It can truly be said that in all its long history the Kirgiz people and the Moslem faith never saw such dark and evil days, days of arbitrary rule and national tragedy, as during the years of the 'liquidation of the kulaks as a class.'

VII. Conclusion: The 'Time of Tears'

Although the Kirgiz people had no written literature before 1917, their oral tradition was rich in folklore—songs, tales, and epic poems dating back to the tenth century, which recount the exploits of Manas, the people's favourite legendary *batyr* (hero, military leader). Since 1917, however, Kirgiz history has been the history of the enslavement of a proud and freedom-loving people and the systematic destruction of an age-old way of life. Kirgiz resistance to 'sovietisation' began as early as 1918, with the uprising at Belovodsk, which initiated the movement called *basmachestvo*—a wholesale refusal on the part of the Kirgiz people to give up their traditional religion, family life, and system of values, and a stubborn defence of the religious and moral precepts of the *Shariat* and *Adat* against the Marxist precepts of hatred and class struggle. The Kirgiz reaction against the 'total collectivisation of agriculture and liquidation of the kulak class' was especially violent. During the early 1930s thousands of Kirgiz were arrested, robbed of their possessions and deported to remote sections of the Soviet Union. Writers and other intellectuals suffered especially. Tynystanov, Boyalinov, Kenensarin, Turusbayev, Karachev, Sadyk, Kokenov, and many others were either imprisoned or killed. But, as a Kirgiz poet said:

> True talent goes on living after death.
> The earth, rejoicing, blossoms in its rays.
> If even on the poet's mortal breast
> A heavy tombstone lies,
> . . . . . .
> To foes' discomfiture, the poet never dies.

Independent national literature no longer exists. The mosques have been destroyed, and the country brought close to economic ruin. Thousands of Kirgiz families have lost their breadwinners. One Kirgiz *akyn*, or singer of folk songs, has called the years of

Soviet rule in Kirgizia the 'time of tears.' Occasionally, even through official Soviet statistics, this melancholy truth slips out. For example, Ryskulov gives the following figures on enrolment in Kirgiz schools[1]:

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS

Nationality	*Academic year 1930–31*	*Academic year 1931–32*
Kirgiz	44,692	69,689
Europeans	77,419	37,223
Uzbeks	9,140	9,634
Others	4,065	2,771

This represents a total drop of 41,490 in the number of students of nationality other than Kirgiz or Uzbek enrolled in Kirgiz schools. (Here 'European' is to be interpreted as 'non-indigenous,' i.e., Russian, Ukrainian, etc.) As an eyewitness, I am able to explain how it happened that during a single year—in the case of the Przheval'sk region, during a single month (March, 1932)—more than forty thousand children 'disappeared' from Kirgiz schools.

It must be recalled that the forced collectivisation, 'dekulakisation,' and artificial famine of the early 1930s tore millions of Soviet citizens from their homes, transforming them into human derelicts, dispossessed and deported, who streamed by rail or on foot toward the northern and eastern regions of Asiatic Russia. During the period between 1930 and 1932 Przheval'sk, and indeed, the whole Issyk-Kul valley, provided one of the termini for this human torrent. By the autumn of 1931 there had been a noticeable increase in the population of Przheval'sk. During the winter of 1931–32 the new arrivals settled down to lick their wounds; some of them found work, and many of them sent their children to the local schools. But before spring all of this had changed. The night of March 18 marked the beginning of a new wave of arrests. The 'immigrants' were ordered to leave the Issyk-Kul valley within forty-eight hours, and were permitted to take only such of their belongings as they could carry. No exceptions were made, even for the sick, the aged, or schoolchildren.

At dawn on March 20 the first columns of exiles, under NKVD guard, began to converge on the Przheval'sk pier, from which the lake steamers *Pioneer* and *Soviet Kirgizia* were to take them across the lake to Rybach'ye. The ships, however, had not yet arrived, and

[1] Ryskulov T., *Kirgizstan*, Moscow, 1935, p. 131.

there was no shelter of any kind for the thousands of poorly clad men, women, and children. There was no place for them to buy bread or obtain hot water for making tea. The wind was icy, and the valley rang with the wails of cold and hungry children, and the groans of the sick and dying. Early in the evening a cold rain began to fall; later the rain changed to snow. By midnight the temperature was below freezing.

Three more days passed before the ships finally arrived. By then the 'immigrants' were scarcely recognisable. Wrapped in dirty blankets and rags, they huddled together, blue with cold, pale from hunger and lack of sleep. From time to time, voices would cry out in ultimate desperation: 'Murderers!', 'Beasts!' But the NKVD men simply ordered the dead to be carried aside, wrapped in tarpaulins, and strengthened the guard.

Embarkment began during the evening of the twenty-third, and it soon turned into a furious battle. The crowd stormed the gangway, everyone trying to get a place near the funnel, for a little warmth. Several children and invalids were crushed to death. About two thousand people were herded onto the two small ships, the combined normal capacity of which did not exceed seven or eight hundred. The rest remained on the dock. The authorities 'mobilised' some trucks in town to transport them overland. On the fifth day, the last of those still waiting were put on the ships, which had returned by that time for a second trip.

At Rybach'ye, where the exiles disembarked, large stores of wheat were stacked on the shore, covering hundreds of square meters, and fifteen to twenty metres high. For many years, wheat from the whole Issyk-Kul valley had been brought here and 'stored' in the open air. Exposure to rain and snow had caused the grain to mildew and rot in many places. But none of the starving exiles could get as much as a handful from this mountain of grain. Anyone who took even a pound was punished by the NKVD as a 'looter of socialist property.'

Those who had survived the horrors of the pier at Przheval'sk and the boat trip across the lake, faced a 200-kilometre 'death march' to the railroad station in Frunze. Exactly how many perished in this dreadful exodus will never be known. Such facts do not find their way into official Soviet statistics.

The official record of Soviet Kirgizia is full of impressive 'achievements.' It cannot be denied that, in the thirty-seven years since the Revolution, tractors and tractor drivers, dispensaries, doctors, and nurses have appeared in Kirgizia, or that the number of schools, students and teachers has grown, and that veterinary and agricultural schools, and teachers' training schools have been founded. There has

been an undoubted increase in the number of specialists and technicians in various fields.

I do not know whether there would have been more or fewer schools, tractors, factories, students, dispensaries, doctors, clubs, teachers, if, instead of the Communist dictatorship, some other government had ruled this naturally wealthy region during this period. Nor do I know whether there would have been more cattle or fewer, or whether a larger or a smaller area would have been irrigated, or whether the number of canals and power plants would have been greater. But I do know that no other regime would have dealt so savagely with the people as did the Communists.

Near Santash pass, to the east of Lake Issyk-Kul, stands a stony hill. 'Santash' means 'counted stones.' Kirgiz legend has it that Tamerlane, on his way to make war in China, ordered each of his men to place a stone on this spot. The result was a veritable mountain of stones. Returning to Samarkand after defeating the Chinese, each of Tamerlane's warriors picked up a stone from the heap. When the last man had picked up his stone, a hill of stones remained—those placed there by the men who had died in battle. But if each victim of the Soviet regime had left a stone behind him, this new 'Soviet Santash' would dwarf that of Tamerlane's army to insignificance.

SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

The settling of the nomadic Kirgiz tribes in fixed villages, without which no school system could be set up, took place, in the main, during the period of 'total collectivisation' (1929–33). At this time there appeared in Kirgizia swarms of homeless, abandoned, half-savage children, who roamed the country like ghosts. Their fathers and mothers had been arrested by the NKVD and sent to concentration camps, or shot. The country, formerly prosperous and flourishing, had been reduced to extreme poverty. Settling, and the kolkhoz system, spelled famine or near-famine for the whole population of Kirgizia, with the exception, of course, of those in power. The Kirgiz saying that 'for a man enslaved and oppressed to acquire wealth is like digging a well with a needle' was amply borne out.

By the end of 1933 over 70 per cent of the rural population had been herded into kolkhozes. By 1938, the government considered the settling of the nomadic population complete.

There is no doubt that the illiteracy of the population, and their fanatical devotion to religion, greatly impeded the 'building of socialism' and the pursuit of the tasks imposed upon the Kirgiz people by the Communist Party. Since the Kirgiz language had no written alphabet, a modified form of the Arabic alphabet was used. But this complicated script was poorly adapted to the needs of a

broad campaign against illiteracy. A much simpler and easier script was needed.

The First Turkological Convention in Baku, in 1926, recognised the advantages and the practical superiority of the Latin alphabet over the Arabic. Moreover, the change would also achieve the political aim of severing cultural ties with Turkey. But the convention held that the introduction of the new alphabet should be the responsibility of each republic and each people concerned.

In 1927 a decree of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR set up an All-Union Central Committee on the New Turkic Alphabet. Its purpose was to devise a new, uniform alphabet for all the nations of the Soviet East. For sounds which could not be rendered in Latin characters it was proposed to create new symbols, similar to the Latin. A decree of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, dated August 7, 1929, required all upper-level institutions to use the new Latinised alphabet for all their written and printed communications, and made publication in the old Arabic alphabet illegal. Although the time limit for the change to the new alphabet was set for 1931, several provinces and republics, Kirgizia among them, changed to the Latin alphabet much earlier. For example, the first textbooks in the Kirgiz language appeared as early as 1923, thanks to the outstanding Kirgiz philologist, poet, writer, and translator, Kasym Tynystanov—later executed as an 'enemy of the people.'

The first Kirgiz newspaper was published in 1924, employing a somewhat improved Arabic alphabet, which was replaced in 1928 by the new Latin alphabet.

Once textbooks translated into Kirgiz had become available and the gradual change to the Latin alphabet was underway, the liquidation of illiteracy and semiliteracy among the people became urgently important. Numerous training and refresher courses for teachers were set up, in order first of all to raise the literacy of the teachers themselves.

The first primers to appear were extremely incompetent and carelessly compiled, and broke the most rudimentary rules of language and printing technique. Nevertheless, 'centres' for the liquidation of illiteracy and semiliteracy mushroomed. Anybody who had a little education and was at all able to write was engaged to teach at these centres. It was impossible to get qualified teachers, because there were thousands of centres and only a few educated people. The reaction of the native population was at first cool and suspicious; in time, however, they became less hostile, and eventually the people came to the centres of their own free will. Sometimes adults, a father or a mother, an older brother or sister, sat at the same table with the

children and learned the first sounds and letters of the alphabet. As a result, by April 1, 1929, 91,537 people—i.e., 10 per cent of all illiterates above the age of eight—had completed their study or were studying at the centres.

Newspapers, periodicals, and textbooks were published in the new Latin alphabet exclusively. The steadily growing network of illiteracy-liquidation centres made it possible by 1933 to 'process' 190,000 adults. Simultaneously, the school system also grew.

In 1923 there were 255 schools with 17,000 pupils; in 1924–25, 463 with 28,000; in 1925–26, 484 with 35,000; in 1926–27, 503 with 37,000. In 1926–27, 39 per cent of school-age children were receiving instruction.[1]

In the following years, the school system expanded steadily.[2]

	1927–28	*1928–29*	*1929–30*	*1930–31*	*1931–32*
Number of schools	503	520	593	900	1,019
Number of classes	933	1,020	1,200	2,274	2,977
Number of pupils	36,940	40,800	48,026	95,006	119,313

Of the total number of 119,000 pupils, 70,000 were Kirgiz.

As the number of elementary and secondary schools increased, the network of special courses, trade schools, and higher educational institutions also grew. The training of native cadres could not be delayed, because the Kremlin's orders could not be carried out without native leaders and executives, and there were very few Kirgiz in the administration. The proportion varied from 3 to 15 per cent, and in some offices there were no Kirgiz at all. For instance, as late as 1933 there was not one Kirgiz among a staff of twenty-five at the People's Commissariat of Light Industry.

A great deal of money was spent on the various courses, much of it inefficiently. There were not enough textbooks. The curriculum was frequently changed. Instructors were engaged haphazardly. The dormitories, without which many educational institutions would not have had any students, were incredibly crowded and dirty. There was a shortage of beds, bed linen, tables, and chairs. There was a chronic shortage of visual aids. Instruction was superficial, and there was no one who felt particularly responsible for organising the educational programmes. Still the courses expanded and their numbers increased. During the period from 1928 to 1933, over 10,000 specialists in various fields graduated from, or were still studying at,

[1] Ryskulov, T. *Kirgizstan*, Moscow, 1935, p. 136.

[2] *Loc. cit.*

CHART 1

ENROLMENT IN TRADE SCHOOLS, SECONDARY SCHOOLS, AND HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN KIRGIZIA
1928–1929 and 1931–1932[1]

Name of School	*1928–1929*		*1931–1932*	
	Number of		*Number of*	
	schools	*students*	*schools*	*students*
Teachers' Training School	2	260	4	651
Agricultural Technical School	2	225	—	—
Medical School	1	77	1	444
Business School	1	63	—	—
Music School	1	40	1	34
School of Crafts and Trades	1	40	—	—
School of Mines	1	60	—	—
Rabochii Fakul'tet (Workers' Faculty)	1	95	1	340
Soviet Party School	1	150	3	370
Trade School	5	80	—	—
School of Finance	—	—	1	122
Hydrotechnicum	—	—	1	112
Construction Technical School	—	—	1	205
Zootechnicum	—	—	1	201
Coal Technicum	—	—	1	100
Factory School	—	—	17	1,600
Preparatory Courses for Higher Educational Institutions	—	—	2	106
Various short courses (three- to six-month and one-year courses)	27	920	51	2,992
Teachers' College	—	—	1	120
Communist University	—	—	1	120
Zoological and Veterinary (College)	—	—	1	150
School of Sovkhoz Administration	—	—	1	52
School of Agricultural Melioration	—	—	1	72
Kolkhoz Technical School	—	—	1	172
Cooperative Technical School	1	160	1	209
Sericulture Technical School	—	—	1	96
Cotton Technical School	—	—	1	300
Veterinary Technical School	—	—	1	100
Sheep-breeding Technical School	—	—	1	100
Leather Technical School	—	—	1	100
	44	2,170	97	8,868

[1] Ryskulov, T. *Kirgizstan*, Moscow, 1935, p. 139.

the technical schools and higher educational institutions of Kirgizia. Chart 1 provides a list of the various types of educational institutions in 1928–29 and in 1931–32.

In this way the problem of *korenizatsiya*[1] of the administrative machine was given a solution. Of course, the graduates of these schools had only a superficial and patchy education. The reasons for this were many. Paramount among them were the following: (1) Teachers were engaged at random and most of them were untrained; (2) the majority of village school pupils were semiliterate; (3) the textbooks in specialised fields were not suitable for unprepared students—most students were unable to use them; and (4) the 'project method' of instruction precluded any serious training of specialists.

These conditions allowed only the most superficial instruction. But it was important to have a certificate from some educational institution. Such a certificate, if its bearer also had a Komsomol or Party card, opened the way into the administrative apparatus, and the process of 'rooting in' the apparatus was speeded up.

In 1935 the number of elementary schools reached 1,562, with 123,470 pupils; the number of secondary and incomplete secondary schools 106, with 38,170 pupils.

In 1939, the Russian alphabet was introduced in Kirgizia, supplanting the Latin alphabet, which had been officially introduced in 1928. This change made it easier for the central authorities to govern the 'independent free republic' of Kirgizia. As for the people, in spite of their common blood and language, they no longer understand one another's written language: the son now writes in the Russian, the father in the Latin, and the grandfather in the Arabic alphabet. Correspondence between the members of the same family requires the services of an interpreter!

[1] Literally, 'rooting in,' i.e., organising local offices of national provinces in such a way that the work could be done by natives.—Ed.

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST ILLITERACY AND SEMILITERACY IN THE UKRAINE, TRANSCAUCASUS, AND NORTHERN CAUCASUS, 1922–1941

by Nina Nar

I. Introduction

THE problem of 'liquidating' illiteracy and semiliteracy was raised in an urgent form in the early days of the October Revolution. 'The only obstacle to the construction of socialism in our country,' Lenin declared, 'is the low cultural level of the masses.' And Trotsky commented upon this remark as follows: 'Although it is indeed the only obstacle, all of our hopes for the possibility of building socialism are foundering upon it.'[1]

The decree on the 'liquidation of illiteracy and semiliteracy' which was issued on December 26, 1919, included the following sentence:

> The entire population of the [Russian Soviet Federative Socialist] Republic from eight to fifty years of age who are unable to read and write must learn reading and writing either in their native language or in Russian, according to their own preference.

The campaign against illiteracy was to be based on the widespread initiative of the masses, under the guidance of a newly established Extraordinary Commission for the Liquidation of Illiteracy. The words 'liquidate' and 'Extraordinary Commission' had rather sinister connotations.[2] But Soviet spokesmen emphasised that the participation of the masses was to be entirely voluntary.

The most important of the various voluntary organisations was the society 'Away with Illiteracy,' founded in the early twenties, with

[1] Quoted by Lunacharski, A. V., and A. Khalatov, in *Voprosy kul'turnovo stroitel'stva RSFSR* [Problems of Cultural Construction in the RSFSR] (Lunacharski's Report to the Fourteenth All-Russian Congress of Soviets, May 15, 1929), pp. 5, 6.

[2] See footnote 1, p. 107.–Ed.

M. I. Kalinin as chairman and Maxim Gorky as a member of its Central Council. According to Soviet sources, by 1928 'Away with Illiteracy' had grown into a network of about twenty-seven thousand cells, which had given instruction to more than a million illiterates. (As we shall see presently, such statistics must be taken with several grains of salt.) Nevertheless, by the mid-1920s the work of such voluntary organisations was recognised, even officially, to be woefully inadequate. At the same time the old Russian methods of teaching reading by letters and syllables, and giving instruction in separate academic subjects (arithmetic, geography, etc.), were declared outdated and useless. Instead, a new method of teaching without textbooks was introduced. It was based on two principles: (1) beginners should be taught to read by whole words rather than syllables, and (2) all teaching materials should be politically oriented. These new methods were specified in detail in numerous decrees, which also fixed the duration of courses at three (later six) months.

Reporting on one of her last conversations with Lenin, N. K. Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, wrote:

> I told him that the Americans were planning to liquidate illiteracy in America by 1927 and that they were using the slogan: 'Let everyone who is literate teach one who is not.' V[ladimir] I[lyich]'s eyes sparkled: 'Yes, and we'll do it too, if the masses themselves will take an interest.'[1]

On January 19, 1924, the Eleventh Congress of Soviets passed a resolution 'On Liquidating Illiteracy by the Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution.' And the slogan 'You who are literate, teach someone who is not!' began to appear everywhere. By 1929, according to a Soviet source, 40,000 'Liquidation Centres'[2] had been set up and 8,161,000 illiterate persons had received instruction.[3]

But the deadline for the elimination of illiteracy was extended, first in 1929, on the tenth anniversary of the original decree, and again five years later in 1934. The first extension was necessitated, according to the official account, by a lack of appropriate teaching methods and teaching aids—although the new Soviet methods had been introduced several years before; and by the fact that the teaching staff had not yet been completely 'won over' politically.

During the 1930s, in line with the general reversion to older

[1] Krupskaya, N. K., *Likvidatsiya negramotnosti* [The Liquidation of Illiteracy] (a collection of articles and reports for 1920–36), People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR, 1938, p. 9.

[2] Popularly called '*likpunkty*,' i.e. '*likvidatsionnye punkty*' (literally, 'liquidation points').—Ed.

[3] *Malaya sovetskaya entsiklopediya* [Small Soviet Encyclopedia], Vol. 4 (1929), p. 636.

methods and practices in Soviet education, the method of teaching reading by syllables rather than whole words and instruction in separate academic subjects were reintroduced. My own experience testifies to the inadequacy of the 'whole-word' method, at least for the Russian language.[1]

New and more concrete instructions from the Party and government followed, e.g., the order 'to guarantee the completeness of the liquidation of illiteracy and semiliteracy among workers up to the age of fifty' during 1936–37. However, among the Soviet masses these resolutions and decrees were increasingly refracted and blurred as one moved farther away from the centres of government. This was true, at least, in an industrial centre in the Transcaucasus and in the sugar-beet-growing districts of the Ukraine—in the oblasts of Podol'sk, Kiev, and Odessa—where I worked.

II. The Ukraine: 1922–1925

The sugar-refinery workers in the town where I taught (in the Podol'sk oblast) were mostly Ukrainians and Poles. The Soviet government was represented by the military commandant, himself a Lett and a Party member, who was in charge of the refinery military guard of Letts and Chinese. There was a Party cell consisting of four or five Party members from the regional capital. Since they spoke only Russian and wore Russian clothes, they were referred to rather scornfully as 'Muscovites.' In the 1920s these Party members conducted themselves simply and without ceremony (the air of stern loftiness was adopted later), and were on friendly terms with the refinery personnel. Moreover, they applied relatively little pressure for fulfilment of official orders or decrees, and even protected the refineries from some of the demands and prohibitions issued by higher authorities. In return, the refinery people hid the Party members in their apartments or in the refinery chimneys to protect them from the partisans.

Each sugar refinery had a school, a combination clubroom-theatre, and a hospital. As late as 1923–24, however, the refinery

[1] This would appear to be peculiarly true of Russian for at least two reasons. As compared with English, Russian has (1) more long words, (2) greater graphic similarity between words (and thus fewer distinctive 'word-Gestalts'). This last, in turn, may be traced to two peculiarities of Russian orthography and alphabet: (*a*) capitalisation is less frequent than in English; (*b*) there are fewer letters which extend above or below the basic letter line. Out of a total Russian (Cyrillic) alphabet of 32 letters (new orthography) only three letters extend above and three below the line (plus three which extend very slightly below). This compares with the English (Latin) alphabet of twenty-six letters, of which nine extend above and five below. Also, the frequency of occurrence of these letters in English is considerably greater than that of their Russian counterparts.—Ed.

schools remained closed for long periods of time because of a lack of funds, teaching staff, or pupils—or a combination of all three. The original decree of December 26, 1919, on the 'liquidation of illiteracy and semiliteracy' was implemented among the refinery workers exclusively by volunteer teachers. At a meeting of all workers and employees of the refinery it had been 'resolved' that every literate person should teach two others to read and write. Workers were classified as 'literate' or 'semiliterate,' depending upon whether they were unable to sign their names to the payroll, or could sign their names, but no more. Everyone else was regarded as 'literate.' In fact, no serious attempt was made to implement this resolution. Neither prospective pupils nor prospective teachers had time or inclination to do anything definite about illiteracy. Workers joked about the resolution: 'So they set up a resolution. So let it stand there!'

On Marxist-Leninist premises, the struggle against illiteracy had to be related to the struggle with 'survivals of the past.' 'You won't go far,' Lenin had declared, 'on literacy alone.' Accordingly, centres for the political orientation and education of the masses were set up in the form of reading rooms, libraries, motion-picture theatres, and—most important of all—Communist study rooms, known as 'Red Corners.' These last were set up everywhere—in the clubroom, the school, the local trade-union committee offices, the refinery shops, the dormitories for seasonal workers, the hospital, and the cooperative store. The Red Corners were used for reading of newspapers, propaganda talks, lectures, and discussion meetings. Two or three illiterate persons were assigned for instruction to each Corner. But most of the people who were placed in charge of the Corners were themselves uncultured and barely literate. They had little success in organising Corner activities, and they did almost nothing toward the elimination of illiteracy.

The trade unions got people to come to the lectures and discussions by various stratagems, including the organising of 'amateur nights' and dances. People were glad to drop in at the Corner to play checkers, to have a smoke or a drink (bringing the necessary ingredients in their pockets). But they resisted the political propaganda which was disseminated at the Corners. This resistance was expressed in various ways: for example, workers plastered devalued Soviet bank-notes (which were called 'trowels' because of their elongated shape) all over the doors of the clubroom-theatre and pencilled obscene remarks on the official slogans and decrees posted there.

Among the women the campaign against illiteracy was carried on by a women's organiser, but she failed miserably in her efforts to 'organise' the women. Employing the principle of 'divide and

conquer,' she began by recruiting domestic servants to her classes. After a few months of her political indoctrination, however, they were fired by their irate mistresses. As a result the domestic workers were left without work, and the women's organiser was left without women. From time to time two or three women workers would drop into the 'Liquidation Centre' to enjoy themselves 'under official auspices,' but they did little if any studying. Once in a while one of them took a book home to read.

The peasants who grew the sugar-beet which supplied the refineries, as well as seasonal workers who were employed in the refineries during the busy season, lived in nearby villages. The first of the villagers slated to receive instruction were farm labourers and poor peasants; later the 'middle' peasants were added. 'Reading huts,' Red Corners, Liquidation Centres, and libraries were opened in the villages. The Liquidation Centres were located in the village schools, and the local teachers were paid to run them. People were urged and even hounded into coming to the meetings, lectures, discussion groups, and the Liquidation Centre by the village council, the village court, and the committees for the poor. Among the drawing cards were 'amateur nights' with local talent from the villages and sugar refineries, as well as professional troupes of actors from the city. The latter often went to the villages and refineries in search of food and as a result were dubbed 'the hungry ones.'

The 'liquidation of illiteracy,' and its collateral 'political education,' proceeded even more slowly and haltingly in the villages than in the refineries. Only with the greatest difficulty were a few students —mostly between sixteen and eighteen years of age—recruited for the classes. The strong doses of political propaganda, the attempt to 'revolutionise the consciousness, habits, and way of life' of the masses, were the main reasons for this mass rejection of the literacy programme.

III. The Ukraine (Odessa Oblast): 1925–1932

The illiteracy campaign in the sugar refineries of the Odessa oblast in 1925–26 was more persistent and effective than that in the Podol'sk oblast during the preceding years. Here the chief role was played by regular school teachers, all of whom had been sent to the raion capital for retraining in the new teaching methods. Attendance was relatively good; the trades unions put pressure on their members, threatening them with expulsion from the union and loss of their jobs if they did not attend literacy classes. Since almost all of the permanent workers in the refineries and many of the seasonal workers were trade-union members, this pressure proved quite effective.

In one refinery town the teachers ran two Liquidation Centres—one at the school, with about fifteen permanent workers as pupils, the other at the refinery, with about a dozen seasonal workers. The teachers were paid some four roubles an hour for this work. Study groups of two to four people also met at the club, the co-operative store, the hospital, the two refinery settlements, and the *artel*[1] set up by a group of Russian Old Believers among the seasonal workers. Some of the teachers were paid 'liquidators'; others were volunteers assigned to this extra work by their trades unions. The five women volunteer teachers for the domestic servants were assigned to this work by the women's organisation.

The period of instruction was fixed at six months, and the classes were held two or three times a week. The method used to teach reading was to break up a text into sentences, the sentences into words, and the words in turn into sounds. Newspapers, placards, and slogans provided the basic reading material. Among the slogans I recall the following: 'We are poor because we are ignorant,' 'Religion is the opium of the people,' 'Workers of the world, unite!' 'You who are literate have the duty to teach those who are not!' Primers and other textbooks were used to supplement the slogans and placards. Among the texts with a strong dose of political orientation were *Away with Illiteracy*, *Our Cornfield*, and *The Red Ploughman*. Instruction was given either in Ukrainian or in Russian, depending upon the individual teacher.

Many of the Liquidation Centres and study groups gradually ceased to function; workers were transferred to different shifts and used this as an excuse for dropping out. But before the 'revolutionary holidays' (May 1, November 7, etc.), renewed efforts were made to increase attendance and boost student progress. There was supposed to be an examination in the spring, but it was never given. During the winter of 1925–26 a total of forty-six persons received instruction in the two Liquidation Centres and various study groups. At the end of the school year about thirty of these (all of whom had attended elementary school at some time or other) were classified as having completed their instruction. The other sixteen or so found themselves among the illiterates when the new canvass was taken, and were required to repeat the course.

The progress of the struggle against illiteracy and semiliteracy was measured (in Stalin's much-quoted words) 'not only by the speed of reading and writing but also by the extent to which a semiliterate or illiterate person is turned into a politically and socially conscious individual.' But by this standard, too, the results were poor. The political instruction offered by the Liquidation Centres

[1] Cooperative association of craftsmen or artisans.—Ed.

and study groups was badly organised, fragmentary, and largely ineffective. But, of course, it left some traces.

Simultaneously with the work among refinery workers, efforts to increase literacy were undertaken among the peasants in the villages. A *kul'tpokhod*[1] was organised in the villages in 1928–29 with the help of the schools and *rabfaks*[2]. The student body, especially the senior classes, of the secondary schools was sent into the villages to combat illiteracy and carry on political orientation and indoctrination. But the campaign was characterised by much aimless drifting and irresponsibility. Those who were chiefly responsible for its organisation were themselves barely literate; most of them were reluctant to go into the villages in the first place. Once there, many of them promptly deserted from the 'cultural front.' N. K. Krupskaya's prediction that the masses, eager for knowledge, would 'take it by storm, so to speak,' was not borne out.

The political and anti-religious indoctrination met especially strong resistance on the part of the peasants. In 1928 in a village near the refinery where I taught, 'workers of the cultural army' collected peasant signatures on a petition urging that the local churches be closed in time for the anniversary celebration of the October Revolution. Members of the Komsomol took down the bells and whitewashed the ikons. At the anniversary celebration (November 7), Party leaders from the city showered praise on the 'politically conscious peasantry.' But within two days the indignant villagers had thrown the local teacher and the chairman of the village council into a pond, beaten the Komsomol members unmercifully, and forced them to replace the bells and clean up the ikons.

By 1929, the year of the 'great turning point', as Stalin called it [using a phrase employed earlier by Trotsky], the work on liquidation of illiteracy had been greatly slowed down. Hunger was beginning to drive people from the countryside. The Sixteenth Party Congress resolved that, beginning in 1930, compulsory universal education and the liquidation of illiteracy should become the 'fighting task of the Party and government.' But in the sugar refineries and neighbouring villages of the Kiev oblast the struggle against illiteracy was not in the least characterised by 'fighting spirit.' There were the same two or three Liquidation Centres as in the Podol'sk and Odessa oblasts, except that the one attached to the school was called a 'school for semiliterates.' The number of students was still

[1] Abbreviation for *kul'turny pokhod* (literally, 'cultural campaign', i.e., a strenuous organised effort to eliminate illiteracy in a given area in a very short time).—Ed.

[2] See above, p. 39, footnote 1.—Ed.

small—six or eight in each of the Centres, taught by paid instructors, and twenty or thirty more in a few small groups taught by volunteer 'liquidators.' A handful of domestic servants were receiving instruction through the women's organisation. In all cases attendance and student progress were no better than they had been earlier in other parts of the Ukraine.

By the end of the school year 1931–32 nothing more was heard in the Ukraine about the liquidation of illiteracy. By this time the famine had begun to produce a movement of masses of the population opposite to that of 1922: hungry peasants were flocking to the refineries, factories, and beyond, to the large cities of European Russia, to Siberia, and the Caucasus. Sugar-refinery workers began to follow, leaving their jobs for positions in heavy industry, where they were allowed as much as seven hundred grammes of bread daily, and up to three hundred grammes for each dependent. Those who made such a move were branded as 'labour deserters.'

IV. The Transcaucasus: 1932–1938

The centres of heavy industry in Georgia and Armenia, particularly the latter, welcomed these 'labour deserters,' together with their fellow fugitives from Ukrainian kolkhozes. As so-called 'national minority' republics, they enjoyed a privileged position. Thus far they had been spared famines, purges, and arrests.

The Armenian town of Allaverdy, birthplace of A. I. Mikoyan, was the centre of heavy industry in the Transcaucasus. The town was composed of two sections: a workers' settlement with 3,000 inhabitants and a village with 2,500. It had two large factory complexes, mines, and a construction project, requiring both skilled and unskilled labour. The local population was made up of Armenians, Greeks, and Turks, all of whom cordially hated each other. They were as one only in their common hatred of the Russians, whom they regarded (with considerable justice) as the bearers of Bolshevism. But they were strongly drawn toward the Russian language and Russian culture, since a knowledge of these opened doors everywhere. They also exhibited a penchant for education—or rather for school diplomas—since these represented a passport to promotion within the factories.

An evening school for 450 adults had been organised on the premises of the regular Armenian ten-year school; attached to it were two beginners' groups of twenty-five students each. The Greek seven-year school had only one Liquidation Centre, with between fifteen and twenty students. In both schools there were Russian sections and Liquidation Centres with instruction carried on in

Russian. The school teachers were given additional pay for their work with illiterates and semiliterates.

Group and individual home study were arranged for responsible Party workers who had 'risen from the ranks,' as well as for 'shock-workers,' and later for Stakhanovites. They were instructed by school teachers and engineers paid at the regular school rates. All the local institutions and organisations—the factory complexes, the bank, court, city council, municipal section of education (ONO), hospital, dispensary, pharmacy, and even the kindergartens and nurseries—had study groups for the lower-echelon employees and junior staff members. Most of these were run by paid teachers, a few by unpaid volunteers. Student attendance and progress were extremely poor; students were constantly being kept back to repeat the same course. Little if any work was done among the women. In the Turkish villages women and girls—promised brides at the age of ten or eleven—systematically refused to attend classes; they were unmoved by threats of any kind.

The Russian-language Liquidation Centres did not last very long; in the summer of 1933, just before the system of internal passports was introduced, almost all of the recent Russian arrivals—most of whom were fugitives from kolkhozes—were brutally rounded up and deported from Armenia. They were released in Georgia, where they scattered to the mines and factories; many of them quietly returned to Armenia.

All of the large mining villages in the Allaverdy raion had Liquidation Centres in their elementary and seven-year schools, but it seems unlikely that much was done in these centres to combat illiteracy. Judging from reports at teachers' conferences, even the regular schools were often closed for long periods, sometimes for a whole winter, because of the shortage of teachers or for some other reason. There was an even greater shortage of teachers for the Liquidation Centres, and many of them must have been closed a good deal of the time.

In remote mountainous regions of the raion there were two or three villages of Russian Old Believers. Teachers who were sent to these villages considered themselves 'exiles'; frequently they threw up their jobs. The Liquidation Centres in these villages were virtually inoperative. There were also a few German colonies in the mountains. They had their own German-language schools, and the villagers there were all literate.

Several dozen Persian coal miners—who were Persian subjects, not Soviet citizens—worked in the local mines under a special contract. Their living conditions were quite unusual: they lived in separate barracks, had their own Moslem cook, and were paid in

gold. Sometimes they went on visits to their families in Persia. But they were treated to political orientation and indoctrination like everyone else. Four or five of them joined the Communist Party, moved out of the barracks into separate apartments, and were taught Russian in a special group. They made some attempt to increase the literacy (in Persian) of their fellow-countrymen who continued to live in the barracks. And they sometimes gave 'cultural' talks to further the political education of their compatriots.

In the capital cities of Tbilisi (Tiflis) and Yerevan the schools and Liquidation Centres were much better run than in the outlying areas. This was especially true of Tbilisi, where the teachers were well qualified and adequately supplied with good teaching aids. Plans and programmes had been drawn up for the liquidation of illiteracy and semiliteracy; there were oral consultations, and school supplies in sufficient amounts. Native-language schools for illiterates and semiliterates were set up in all the Tbilisi schools—conducted in Georgian, Armenian, Greek, German, and Russian. In addition there were many study groups taught by either paid or volunteer 'liquidators.' But, despite all this, the work proceeded very slowly, and under lowered standards.

During the mid-1930s people in the Transcaucasus began to glorify Russian as 'the language of Lenin.' At a meeting in his native town of Allaverdy in October 1937, Mikoyan spoke at length on the importance of a mastery of the Russian language. Addressing a mass meeting from the balcony of NKVD headquarters, he concluded with the ringing words: 'Let anyone who wishes the Armenian people well teach them the Russian language. Long live *Khorudain Ayastan* [Red Armenia] and the *Khorudain* [Red] intelligentsia!' This was flattering to teachers of Russian. But on the following day the first person to be dismissed, in a wave of dismissals that followed upon Mikoyan's visit, was a Russian teacher. Within a week other teachers —Russian and Armenian—were being discharged. This increased the shortage of teachers and made it necessary to merge classes and close many schools. No one had time or energy to worry about the liquidation of illiteracy. It was six or seven months before the situation settled down to something like normalcy.

V. Northern Caucasus: 1938–1941

The Northern Caucasus (a part of the RSFSR) was very different from the Transcaucasus. This mineral-water region, sprinkled with health resorts, was a happy land with an unhappy population. The poverty of the people and the schools was striking. Visitors from other areas were not permitted to take up residence here. The popula-

tion consisted chiefly of Russian Cossacks, many of whom had been 'dekulakised' and exiled. Purges, arrests, repression—which had only begun in the Transcaucasus—had been going on here for some time. Two or three teachers from each school had been given a 'test' for political loyalty and then sent back to their posts; some teachers were still waiting for their tests to be completed. Politically, as the saying went, the teachers had been 'won over.'

Following the great purges of the late 1930s we had to carry out a major purge of the textbooks. We tore out whole pages, pasted in new portraits to cover those of Old Bolsheviks who had been liquidated, crossed out words, sentences, and whole passages—following precise and detailed instructions. Textbooks, even books of arithmetic problems, lost half of their pages in this process; elementary readers were thinned down to a third of their original size. It must be admitted that both pupils and teachers enjoyed this paper purge: 'Now,' people said jokingly, 'we'll be able to fulfil the plans.'

I was assigned to a health-resort town which, with its surrounding farms, had a population of about 26,500. A majority of the adult population worked in the health resort or the various sanatoria and thus were trade-union members. Each union had its own Liquidation Centre, run by a teacher paid at regular school rates, for the instruction of workers, office employees, and their wives. Most centres had between eight and twelve students. Classes were held in the schools, in Red Corners, or in private apartments; they met three times a week. Each local trade-union committee provided quarters, heat, light, and school equipment for its members. These expenses (like the teachers' salaries) were met out of a fund for 'cultural and educational purposes.' Actually, such funds often remained partially unused at the end of a fiscal year, causing the local committee chairman much anxiety. Frequently the last few weeks or even days of the fiscal year would be marked by hastily organised supplementary lessons, trips to museums, or visits to the cinema—all intended to use up the potential surplus and give an impression of vigorous 'cultural and educational' activity.

VI. Students and Teachers

My teaching was done on one of the farms which supplied the health-resort. There were six teachers on this farm, four of whom were assigned to Liquidation Centres, one to a class for retarded children, and one to a class for young men undergoing pre-induction military training. All together, thirty-seven persons on this farm were receiving Liquidation-Centre instruction in reading and writing.

But the greatest number of students were enrolled in the evening schools for adults. They began with the fifth grade, but included preparatory groups with a curriculum approximating that of the fourth grade of regular elementary school. These preparatory groups were called either 'schools for semiliterates,' 'Liquidation Centres,' or simply 'evening schools.' Actually they were enlarged Liquidation Centres, located on school premises and subject to the control of the municipal section of education and even of the town committee of the Party. Their curriculum was the same as that of the Liquidation Centres; they used first- to fourth-grade school texts. Classes met in three-hour sessions four times a week; the period of instruction was one or two years. The educational level of the students in these preparatory groups—like that of students in the Liquidation Centres and individual groups—was extremely varied. Some students did not even know the alphabet; others knew the alphabet but were not able to write. Some read slowly, letter by letter or syllable by syllable; others read fluently, but knew practically no arithmetic, grammar, or geography.

Our school had two such preparatory groups, the larger of which had twenty-four students—office employees, women workers from various establishments, and wives of local Party members—the smaller group (the one which I taught) had eighteen. It had been set up for militiamen of the NKVD and local police, for Red Army veterans and Komsomol members, but it also included two office workers (Party members), two retarded children, and three sanatorium workers.

Instruction in reading and writing Russian, which was central to the entire curriculum, was at the same time its weakest link. Students had great difficulty in mastering cultured literary Russian. The arithmetic lessons went somewhat better. All the students could count up to a hundred; two or three knew their multiplication tables. But those who did not know the tables were very reluctant to learn them. 'I can multiply,' they used to complain, 'without all that fuss!' Many students could go through all the multiplication tables, without a mistake, by counting on the finger joints of their clenched fists—a trick which they had picked up in the army, and which they in turn taught other students.

Geography lessons became lively when students started to wander over the map. One of the policemen, pointing to the new (1939) borders of the USSR, which included part of what had formerly been Poland, took in with a sweep of the blackboard cue all of Poland, as well as Czechoslovakia and part of Germany. I stopped and corrected him. But he replied gaily: 'Go on! It'll all be ours; we'll lop it off!' I explained that we were not aggressors and did not

covet foreign soil. 'Yes, yes, I know,' he answered. 'But we'll lop it off all the same. It'll be ours. You'll see!' He laughed and the others joined in his laughter.

We omitted all study of natural science in class, since no examination in the subject was given. But we made homework assignments 'from page such-and-such to page such-and-such.' However, no one, with the exception of Party members, did any homework.

Discipline was good in the preparatory groups: students stood up to recite, asked permission to leave the classroom or miss a lesson, and apologised when they were late. But attendance was poor. I never had more than nine students present in my class of eighteen; sometimes there were only four or five. When I asked an NKVD man or a policeman who had missed a class what the reason was, he would answer with a frown that he had been 'on a mission,' or had been 'taking away arrested persons.' Once when the head of the municipal section of education visited my class there were only four students present. He gave me a good talking-to and told me to report the delinquent students to the NKVD. I went to the NKVD office.

'What's your complaint, Comrade Teacher?'

I asked that it be made possible for students to attend my classes.

'Why, I'll put them behind bars for a week; that'll show them!'

At this, I began to stick up for my students.

'Well, how are they doing in class? Are they trying?'

'Yes, they're trying.'

'Any further complaints?'

'No.'

Attendance picked up temporarily, but it soon dropped off again. In the larger preparatory group the situation was similar except that attendance was somewhat more regular—thanks to the non-working women who made up a large proportion of the class.

Examinations for the evening schools and the Liquidation Centres were held in the spring at the same time as those in the regular schools. Both students and teachers had pre-exam jitters. An inspector from the municipal section of education, and sometimes a teaching assistant as well, sat in on the examinations. The director of the evening school was present at the evening-school examinations.

Russian dictations were graded as follows: no mistakes—'excellent'; one to four mistakes—'good'; eight or nine mistakes— 'satisfactory'; ten or more mistakes—'poor'. In arithmetic there was one problem with four or five steps (usually solved by not more than one or two students) and five or six examples taken from material which had already been gone over in class. Students who did both the problem and the examples correctly were graded 'excellent,' those

who did only the examples—'good,' those who did only one or two of the examples—'poor.' Students could choose their own seats, and the poorer ones regularly sat next to the better ones to copy their answers. In this they were aided and abetted by the teacher and the teaching assistant. The grading of papers was very liberal. Many mistakes were corrected by the teachers themselves; others were simply passed over.

The reading and geography examinations were based on announced material which had been gone over with the students in class. The assistants rarely asked questions. Prompting was permitted, and in some classes students practised the examination problems and examples with the teacher until they knew them by heart. This was a standing joke. Such procedures were no secret, but they were winked at—as this was to the advantage of everyone concerned, from the officials in the krai Section of Popular Education down to the humblest teacher and student.

Those who made the best grades in the examination were rewarded with trips to rest homes, free books, special marks in their work-books, or laudatory mention in the wall newspapers. The school itself had no funds for such prizes; funds had to be requested from the local trade-union committees. I once went to the committee offices with a request for prize money. 'An outstanding student?' was the response. 'What's that to me? Go ahead and give him a prize, if you want to. It's your school. I don't have enough money to take care of my *own* people.'—I did not convince him.

At the commencement exercises there were speeches, official greetings, good wishes, and solemn promises by both teachers and students; the students also brought the traditional gift of flowers for their teachers.

In the town itself there were three or four home-study groups made up of Party workers who, for one reason or another, did not find it convenient to attend the evening schools. They studied with secondary-school teachers in groups of two or three, sometimes individually. They took no examinations and gave no account of their work; I do not know who paid their teachers.

There were also two or three groups (with three or four students in each group) for wives of certain 'responsible Party workers.' Some of them kept their studying secret; they took no examinations, and their teachers said little about the lessons. In addition there were regular groups of Party wives who studied on the same basis as students in the Liquidation Centres. I had occasion to work with such a group, composed of five women, two of whom were illiterate and three semiliterate. They were the wives, respectively, of the manager, deputy manager, two office workers, and the chairman of

the trade-union committee (all Party members) in a small factory attached to the health resort. The class was temporarily increased to eight by the transfer of three students from another Liquidation Centre, who subsequently dropped out.

This was the best Liquidation Centre with which I had any contact. Sessions were held in a clean heated Red Corner equipped with electric lights. All the students had textbooks. In addition we had the best available notebooks, chalk, ink, and even a blackboard with two maps. At first the factory manager and the chairman of the trade-union committee dropped in frequently to see what kind of instruction their wives were getting. They would raise a few points in grammar or arithmetic, apparently 'checking up' on me. They themselves were studying in a separate group under a secondary-school teacher.

At that time it was not unusual for a Party member who had received an education and had 'risen in the world' to say to his illiterate or semiliterate wife: 'Comrade, we do not travel the same road,' and then to leave her and marry someone else. My Party-wife students were well aware of this practice, which was doubtless one reason why they were such model students. They were never absent or tardy, and they actually did their homework, although the multiplication tables gave them insomnia. Three of them passed the spring examination and entered the fifth grade the next fall, but, because of deficiencies in history and natural science, they were put back into a preparatory group.

Intermediate between the evening schools for semiliterates and the regular elementary schools were the classes for retarded children and persons who had had some instruction but had failed or dropped out. In these classes the curriculum was equivalent to that of the four-year elementary school; but the course was compressed into three years. Each class was supposed to have forty-two pupils, as in elementary school, but some classes actually had as few as fifteen. Pupils ranged in age from eleven to fifteen years. Reading, writing, speech habits, grammar, arithmetic, geography, and natural science comprised the curriculum. Regular school textbooks were used exclusively. History, singing, drawing, and physical education (all included in the elementary-school curriculum) were omitted. The standards were considerably lower than those of regular elementary school but higher than those in the schools for semiliterates. In addition to pupils who had previously failed or dropped out of elementary school, there were others who continued to fall into these categories—including those being kept back for the second or third time and those whose school conduct was unsatisfactory.

All members of these classes were classified as semiliterate, but

differences in their educational level were recognised, and each class was divided into two or three smaller groups. Tests were given in the spring, but here again the standards were extremely low. Those who passed the course were supposed to enter the fifth grade of evening school the next fall; those who failed entirely or made little progress had to stay back for another year, or else go into the evening school for semiliterates. By this time the boys were fifteen, sixteen, or even seventeen, and were required to enter one of the numerous groups for pre-induction military training. In these groups students were not kept back or 'weeded out' but were pushed straight through. After induction they were given further training for semiliterates. Their military service over, they were once again enrolled by their trade-unions in schools for semiliterates. Some of my students had had just such a checkered educational history.

According to the school programme, beginning students in classes for the illiterate were supposed, during the winter, to learn to read by syllables, to write simple sentences from dictation, to master the rudiments of grammar, to count up to the thousands, and to do arithmetic problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Students who passed the course for semiliterates were supposed to be able to read fluently, observing punctuation, and with good intonation. They were expected to know certain basic rules of grammar, and to be able to write applications and receipts and fill out questionnaires. Actual performance, of course, was quite another matter.

VII. Textbooks

As I have already noted, the politically-oriented primers of the 1920s tended to destroy whatever interest in study existed among illiterate people. These texts were filled with political terms and expressions which peasants and workers found strange and difficult. But at the same time they contained material adapted from children's primers which was quite unsuited to the use of adult beginners. I remember my own failure with one such primer—given to me by the women's organisation—in 1928. The first page showed a picture of a peasant village, beneath which were the words 'OUR VILLAGE.' The second page showed a peasant hut with the words 'OUR HUT.' My illiterate Ukrainian peasant woman looked at the pictures, listened to my careful pronunciation of the words—and burst out laughing. Every time I pronounced the words 'our village' or 'our hut' she simply rocked with laughter. To devote such elaborate attention to such simple things—things which were the sum and substance of her whole life experience—struck her as a huge joke. She kept repeat-

ing: 'Village. So it's a village. Hut. So it's a hut. Well, so what?' And again she broke into irrepressible guffaws.

A little further along in the book came the following passage: 'THERE WERE TSARS. THERE WERE [ORTHODOX] PRIESTS. THERE WERE LORDS. THERE WERE SERFS. THE TSARS AND PRIESTS HAVE BEEN DRIVEN OUT. THE LORDS HAVE REMAINED FOR A TIME. THEY HAVE NOT YET BEEN FINISHED OFF.' At that time—and even much later—Ukrainian peasants considered every member of the intelligentsia as a 'lord' or 'lady,' a 'sir' or 'madam' (using the Polish words '*pan*' and '*pani*'). Thus, to my pupil I was a 'lady who hadn't yet been finished off.' She soon lost interest in the lessons, and we parted—to our mutual satisfaction.

Something similar happened to me in 1939, this time with a science textbook. The section on plants began with a discussion of dandelions. My pupil, a man of about forty-five, flared up: 'What kind of a fool do they take me for—studying dandelions! Me with a boy in the fourth grade, and I'm supposed to read about dandelions!'[1] He got up and strode out of the room, slamming the door behind him. I never saw him in class again.

It was comical, and yet painful, to hear a middle-aged student, tired out after a day's hard work, laboriously reading—syllable by syllable: 'GRAND-FATH-ER DEAR, PLEASE MAKE ME A WHIS-TLE.' We teachers were very unhappy about these textbooks and brought up the matter at teachers' meetings, but nothing was done to remedy the situation.

VIII. Make-up of the Student Body

In both the Liquidation Centres and the evening schools for semi-literates the student body was extremely heterogeneous, not only with respect to educational level but also in socio-economic origin. During the 1920s the Liquidation Centres, whether staffed by paid teachers or volunteers, gave first priority to factory workers and (in the villages) to farm labourers, poor peasants, and workers from kolkhozes and sovkhozes. From 1929 on they began to accept the wives of factory and office workers. During the 1930s more and more strata of the Soviet population were drawn into the programme, until by 1938 the whole illiterate population between the ages of eight and fifty were subject to instruction.

The schools for semiliterates included among their students minor Party members, trade-union members, office workers, and their wives, as well as NKVD and local police agents, young men

[1] The Russian word for 'dandelion'—*oduvanchik*—means literally 'something puffed or blown'; it thus suggests more directly than does the English term the childish practices associated with dandelion 'puff-balls.'—Ed.

undergoing pre-induction training, and retarded children. The average age of students in these schools was twenty-four or twenty-five.

This great diversity in the social background and official status of students sometimes led to delicate or embarrassing situations in the classrooms. I once had as a student a Party member who had for some time been 'checking up' on me. A colleague of mine had as a student a judge who had deliberately handed down an incorrect decision against her. Our school director, who was also a teacher, used to give careful and courteous instruction to an NKVD agent who not long before had knocked out his teeth in the course of an interrogation.

IX. Literacy Census

Testing and registration of both illiterates and semiliterates was carried out at the same time. The simplest and most widely-used method was to have canvassers—teachers, secondary-school students, Komsomol members—go from door to door giving brief tests to everyone between eight and fifty years of age (except for children who were actually attending school). The canvassing, which was done during after-school hours, continued for a period of ten days. It was an onerous and unpleasant business. Sometimes we had to return to a given apartment several times because heads of households took elaborate precautions to be 'out' when we called. We were received with hostility and evasiveness. People begged off for reasons of health, work, children, lack of shoes or clothing; some of them categorically refused to attend classes of any kind. We were given strict instructions not to make allowances or exceptions for anyone under any conditions, but in fact we frequently did.

When the question of classes for illiterates and semiliterates was discussed at public meetings there was always some vociferous 'volunteer' who would shout, 'Right! We must learn. Thanks to the Party for being concerned about us. Put down my name. And you, neighbour, why don't you register? We'll go together!' Such people, however, rarely showed up at the Liquidation Centres; they always had a ready excuse for failing to attend classes.

The test which we gave consisted of reading two or three lines from a first-grade reader, writing one or two simple sentences from dictation, and doing arithmetic problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division with two- and three-digit numbers. Anyone who could pass this test was registered as having completed or 'accomplished' the programme for illiterates and was placed directly in the group of semiliterates.

Those who failed were registered as illiterates, subject to appro-

priate instruction in the group of semiliterates. The semiliterates, in turn, were tested from fourth grade textbooks. They had to read a short story or passages from a longer work smoothly and quite rapidly, write several extended sentences from dictation, give evidence of a knowledge of the basic rules of grammar, and be able to do one or two arithmetic problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of large numbers (more than three digits). Those who passed this test were registered as having completed or 'accomplished' the programme for semiliterates and were released from further instruction. Those who failed it were classified as semiliterates, subject to further instruction.

In canvassing, we visited the sanatoria and related establishments during working hours. Hospital attendants, kitchen help, junior service personnel, and others were all given the same test in the same way. This, like the classes themselves, was an interruption of the work schedule which threatened 'norms' and 'fulfilment of plans.' Both managers and trade-union officials tried to get rid of us in every possible way: 'But you've already taken the register a dozen times! There are no illiterates here.'

'Have they completed the courses?'

'They're not going to take any more courses! With all this studying we can't get any work done.'

But we insisted upon giving our tests and usually found several persons who were illiterate and others who were semiliterate.

Sometimes there were two or three canvasses and registrations in one year, and in such cases statistical discrepancies almost always showed up. The last canvass taken while I was in the Soviet Union was during the winter of 1940–41. Just before the canvass was completed one of the raion newspapers singled out the 'total literacy' of our resort town for laudatory comment. But when the registration was completed it showed some 900 illiterates and more than 1,000 semiliterates out of a total population of 26,500. At a school meeting a few days later the teachers were uncertain whether or not to laugh at the press report. But the head of the municipal section of education could not contain himself. 'Did you read this, comrades? This really overshoots the mark!' The press claim was not further publicised; it had too obviously 'overshot the mark,' even for Soviet domestic consumption.

Early in the spring of 1941 the question of compulsory seven-year schooling for all responsible Party workers was raised with special urgency. A great deal had been said and written on this subject over a considerable period of time. Now it was categorically stated that all Party members, under threat of expulsion from the Party and dismissal from their jobs, must appear to take a test in the evening

school for adults. Those who came were given the test for semi-literates, using fourth-grade textbooks. Examinees and examiners were equally uncomfortable. Imposing and inaccessible in their official positions, these portly, middle-aged 'responsible Party workers' looked embarrassed and ill-at-ease behind school desks. Despite copying on the part of the examinees and prompting as well as 'liberal' grading on the part of the examiners, no one passed the test. All were marked down as semiliterate. Some of them were asked to prepare themselves during the summer and take the tests again in the fall so that they could go on to the fifth grade.

Plans were drawn up for new preparatory classes for Party workers which would use the fourth-grade curriculum but with stiffer requirements than the schools for semiliterates, and which would aim at completion of the entire programme. This was partly because most 'graduates' of Liquidation Centres and ordinary preparatory courses who went on to the fifth grade were sent back, or had to do extra work in reading, writing, and grammar to catch up with the rest of the class. They also had to pass additional tests in natural science and history. Such plans were sent down from the administrative centres and then reworked—often abridged—by local authorities. They always ran far ahead of existing resources and possibilities. For example (as I have noted) the original deadline for liquidating illiteracy was 1929; this was extended to 1934. But it was not until 1935–36 that serious efforts were made to carry out this task—and even then many concessions were made and the standards of literacy were drastically lowered. Many people who had completed the course for illiterates still could barely sign their names and read a few words, syllable by syllable. Many who had completed the course for semiliterates read laboriously, and so slowly that they were unable to grasp the sense of what they were reading. Many of them were unable to write complete sentences from dictation; the best they could manage was individual words or even syllables. To pass the semiliteracy test they were coached to write applications, receipts, etc., using a fixed formula which they learned by heart. The arithmetic of most illiterates was limited to addition and subtraction of two-digit numbers. The semiliterates were able to work with four- or five-digit numbers and had a general understanding of proper fractions, percentages, decimals (to two decimal places), and of elementary bookkeeping.

Knowledge of geography was limited to the boundaries of the USSR, the boundaries of the individual republics and their chief cities, and the boundaries and chief cities of the 'capitalist' countries. Because of the students' poor reading ability, geography lessons were learned by heart, the teachers repeating them as often as necessary.

X. Conclusion

It was not, in fact, until 1938–39 that effective, as well as serious, work was done in liquidating illiteracy. But within two years this was interrupted by the outbreak of war, not to be resumed until 1946. In the words of an authoritative Soviet source,

> The war prevented us from completing this work. . . . At the present time there are a considerable number of illiterate and semi-literate persons among the adult population and the young people. Now that the war has been brought to a victorious conclusion, we must, during the years of the Fourth Five-Year Plan, teach these people to read and write.[1]

But if we are to credit the words of Professor E. N. Medynski, a more recent Soviet spokesman, this task no longer presents any serious problems. 'By 1940,' he writes, 'only a part of the population between fifty and eighty years of age remained illiterate, and the percentage of literacy among those under fifty years of age was close to 90 per cent (89·1 per cent).' Such percentages are highly suspect, in view of the known situation up to 1941 and the 'considerable number of illiterate and semiliterate persons' whose existence was admitted by the above-quoted order of 1946.

Referring to the 'astonishing' achievements in combating illiteracy during the 'last twenty years' (i.e., 1932–52), Professor Medynski went on to assert that, as of 1952, the entire Soviet Union was characterised by 'total [*sploshnaya*] literacy.'[2] Such claims as this marked the effective disappearance of references to illiteracy and semiliteracy as 'problems' in the Soviet Union.

[1] Order No. 620 of the Ministry of Education of the RSFSR, May 27, 1946.

[2] Medynski, E. N., *Narodnoye obrazovaniye v SSSR* [People's Education in the USSR], Moscow, Academy of Paedagogical Sciences of the RSFSR, 1952, pp. 27–29.

THE TRAINING OF SOVIET ENGINEERS

by Nikolay Ivanov

THE aim of this paper is to acquaint Western readers with the organisation and day-to-day operation of Soviet engineering schools: admission procedures, teaching methods, student life, graduation requirements, etc. By way of detailed illustration, I shall describe my own training (1935–40) in the Kuibyshev Construction Engineering Institute, located at 5 Kozlov Lane in Moscow, an institution which sets standards for all other institutes of construction engineering in the country (located in Moscow, Leningrad, Sverdlovsk, Tbilisi and many other cities).

As a background to this detailed account some general historical information will prove helpful.

I. Russian Higher Education before 1917

In 1914 there were close to one hundred institutions of higher education of various kinds in Russia, having about 150,000 students, one-third of whom were women. Not more than a quarter of these were engineering schools. The majority of students were trained as teachers and doctors, but there were also many lawyers, agronomists, and practitioners of the various arts. The supply of young engineers was almost adequate to the limited needs of the Russian technology of the time. And Russian engineers, especially graduates of such engineering schools as the Moscow Mining Academy, the Moscow Institute of Technology, and the Petrograd Institute of Communications Engineering, were distinguished by a broad familiarity with various aspects of engineering, in addition to a thorough knowledge of their own technical specialty. Thus, for example, because of a shortage of construction engineers, communications engineers were frequently put in charge of construction projects having little if anything to do with communications, and they carried out such assignments with marked success.

The majority of the students came from the middle and upper

classes of Tsarist Russia—i.e., from families which could afford to pay tuition and maintenance for five years or more. But there were a number of students from the so-called 'lower classes' (peasants, factory workers, artisans, and minor clerical workers) who managed to get a higher education by accepting various privations and working hard at part-time jobs.

Most universities and technical institutes (including engineering schools) operated on a 'free schedule,' i.e., students could attend lectures or not as they wished, and could take examinations whenever they felt prepared to do so. Even specialised subjects were treated in a broad manner, with attention to related fields. In the engineering schools, particular emphasis was placed upon such general theoretical subjects as mathematics and physics. Many students took more than the normal five years to complete their studies because of academic or financial difficulties. There were also a few 'perpetual students.'

Upon completing their course requirements and passing the required examinations, engineering students had to prepare a 'diploma project' (analogous to the 'thesis' of university students) and to defend it before a government commission. They also had to pass state examinations. Graduates were given inclusive titles such as 'construction engineer,' rather than, say, 'engineer of hydraulic construction.'

At the present time, there are very few people left in the Soviet Union who completed their higher education before 1917. Many such people were eliminated by the Bolsheviks as members of the 'bourgeoisie' during the Revolution and Civil War; a relatively small number of them emigrated; the rest remained in the Soviet Union, where their specialised knowledge and experience were drawn upon by the Soviet government, especially in the field of teaching. Although the authorities always mistrusted the political reliability of these men and women, they respected them for their knowledge and skills. After the orgy of purges of the 1930s, culminating in the purging of Yezhov himself in 1938, the government ceased its mass persecution of these older specialists. It even declared its respect for them, began to entrust its most important projects to them, and let them teach their special subjects undisturbed—though without diminishing its political surveillance. For their part, the old specialists ceased to show outward disloyalty to the regime, confining themselves entirely to professional and academic work.

II. The Early Soviet Period: 1921–1929

After the termination of the Civil War the Bolsheviks carried out a number of far-reaching reforms in the universities and technical

schools. Theological and other 'anti-Marxist' schools were closed. In the universities the Faculties of Law, History, and other social and humanistic studies were radically reorganised: instead of the traditional subjects, 'Marxist' studies were introduced, with new textbooks hastily written for the purpose. Engineering schools, however, were relatively unaffected by these 'reforms.' The only significant change in their curriculum was the addition of certain required Marxist subjects: Political Economy (in the sense of Marx's *Capital*, but using Soviet texts), Historical and Dialectical Materialism, and something called 'The Economic Policy of the Soviet State (Dictatorship of the Proletariat).' These subjects occupied four hours a week during the first three years, and did not greatly interfere with the specialised technical studies.

In general, during the 1920s the number of universities and technical institutes and the number of students attending them remained near the pre-1917 level. Graduates received much the same training as in Tsarist days; but the authorities demanded that they be free of 'bourgeois influences' and wholly devoted to the cause of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat and the building of socialism.' The so-called Communist Universities which were founded in the early 1920s for the training of Party members turned out graduates with very vague professional specialties; such graduates were usually called 'economist-engineers' or 'planning engineers.'

During this period, only persons of proletarian origin were admitted as students in Soviet institutions of higher education. If a student was unable to produce documentary evidence of such origin, he could substitute evidence of 'proletarian status,' acquired by putting in a year or two as a factory worker. The applicant's academic record and his grade in the competitive entrance examination, though important, were less essential than an acceptable social origin. Highest priority, of course, went to Party and Komsomol members. Party authorities frequently ordered individual Party members to take university and technical school courses, even in cases where the individuals concerned evinced no desire to become students. In such cases the student and his dependents were provided with a generous Party scholarship. If such students did poorly in their studies they were almost never 'flunked out'; some professor or able student would be assigned to coach them. Directors of universities and technical schools—all of whom were themselves Party members—saw to it that Party-scholarship students were permitted to graduate, no matter how poorly qualified they might be academically. Upon graduation they were appointed to managerial posts where, in fact, they were concerned primarily with Party and administrative matters, and did very little work in their professional specialty.

THE TRAINING OF SOVIET ENGINEERS

It was not the case (as is often assumed) that Soviet universities and technical schools, either in the 1920s or later, admitted *only* Party and Komsomol members as students. In fact, if we leave the Communist Universities out of account, Party and Komsomol members never represented more than about 50 per cent of the student body. In the engineering schools this percentage was even lower, because of the difficulty of the programme of studies. Non-Party students managed to gain admission by passing stiff competitive entrance examinations (in addition to presenting evidence of acceptable social origin). As a rule, they proved to be diligent students in school and competent engineers and technicians after graduation. It should be added that a good many students became Party or Komsomol members not through conviction but only to be able to get a higher education.

The schedule of classes and examinations in Soviet institutions of higher education was always very strict. Attendance was obligatory for all students; those who failed to pass the required examinations at the regular time were entitled to re-examination at the next examination session. If, after that, they still had one or two subjects to pass, they were required to repeat the course or courses. Those who failed more than two subjects were expelled (with the exception of 'Party scholarship' holders). Under this system, almost all students completed their studies in the normal five years, devoting the first four to academic courses and the last to work on a diploma project or thesis. In addition to the specialised courses and the courses in Marxism-Leninism, students took a foreign language (German or English) and physical education. The latter two subjects were not presented on a very high level and were not popular with the students.

Except for the 'Marxist' subjects and the summer 'practical work' required of all students, the programme of studies and the content of individual courses remained about the same as before 1917. This summer 'practice' was spent in factories, in hospitals, or on farms, according to the student's special field of study. Students were required to write a report on what they had seen and done and to pass an examination on this practical work.

There were no tuition charges and most students received small government scholarships for subsistence. Students from out of town were housed in crowded dormitories under conditions that made study very difficult. For the most part they did their studying in classrooms and lecture halls after regular class hours. Dinner and supper were served in special student dining rooms at reduced prices, but the diet was inadequate. Students were also granted such privileges as free rail transportation to and from their homes

(twice a year, during vacation periods), reduced fare on trams, reduced prices for theatre tickets, museums, etc.

On the whole, Soviet students of the 1920s were enthusiastic in their acceptance of Communism. Carried away by its novelty, and favourably disposed toward the measures taken by the regime, they voluntarily participated in the various *subbotniki* (literally, 'Saturdays,' i.e., unpaid work contributed during after-school hours or weekends) and 'campaigns' (collective work on large-scale Communist projects). There was great interest in political speeches and disputes—the latter were still possible at this time—and in so-called 'social activities,' i.e., various groups and clubs organised for study or participation in science, drama, music, sports, student newspapers, etc. Students often took part in the campaigns against illiteracy carried on among the general population.

Most students tried to assume a 'proletarian look,' scorning hats, neckties, and well-combed hair. Dances were considered a 'bourgeois prejudice' and were replaced by concert programmes which included choral singing and mass games. Religion and religious rites were decisively rejected. The 'new Communist problems' were much discussed, among them the sex problem, which was resolved in the spirit of free love and the 'emancipation of women from male egoism, from the kitchen, and from diapers.' The personal possessions of all students were considered common property; there were many occasions when a student found his trousers missing because some other student needed them for a date at the theatre. The women students, having been given ample opportunities for higher education, at first embraced the new views and 'new morality' with enthusiasm. For example, they ostentatiously wore red kerchiefs instead of hats. But as time went on, they were the first to express disapproval of these ideas, especially with regard to marriage and the family.

This picture is not equally typical of all Soviet students of the 1920s: it applies more to the Communist Universities than to engineering schools; more to Party and Komsomol members than to non-Party students; and more to the large cities than to the provinces. Finally, it is more characteristic of the early years of the decade than of its closing years—when a sharp disillusionment with Communist ideas became evident among students of Soviet institutions of higher education. It is worth noting that a majority of the students who were most fervent in their espousal of the Communist ideas of the 1920s turned up on the side of Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Bukharin in opposition to Stalin, and many of them shared the unhappy fate of these former Bolshevik leaders.

III. Educational Reforms: 1929–1935

The First Five-Year Plan and the collectivisation of Soviet agriculture, both of which were begun in 1929, created a great demand for technical specialists and engineers. Foreign specialists, including Americans, were invited to the USSR, but they did not come in sufficient numbers to ease the shortage. The Soviet government hastily set about expanding the network of higher educational establishments, endeavouring at the same time to simplify and accelerate the process of instruction. Many new universities and technical institutes, including engineering schools, were set up; older ones were frequently divided up into two or more new ones, and certain of the existing secondary technical schools (*technicums*) were transformed into engineering colleges. For example, my own school, the Kuibyshev Construction Engineering Institute, was created through a reorganisation of the Kamenev Construction Technicum. In addition, special 'factory-engineering schools' were set up in certain large industrial plants.

There is no question but that the early 1930s saw a rapid expansion of the network of Soviet universities and technical institutes, even if the official Soviet statistics for the period must be regarded as somewhat inflated. According to figures cited by Stalin at the Eighteenth Party Congress (1939), the number of students attending Soviet institutions of higher education was four times as great in 1933, and six times as great in 1938 as in 1929. The absolute figures given for the two later years were 458,000 and 601,000.

Primary attention was devoted to the training of engineers and 'educational workers,' a category which in the Soviet Union includes Communist propagandists and agitators as well as school teachers and university professors. Figures given by Stalin in the same report show a nearly fourfold increase, between 1933 and 1938, in the number of engineers, and an only slightly smaller increase in the number of 'workers in education and the arts,' with two- to threefold increases in other fields:

	Graduated in:	
	1933	*1938*
Engineers	7,900	31,300
Agricultural specialists	4,800	10,600
Workers in education and the arts	10,500	35,700
Physicians and physical education instructors	4,600	13,600
Economists and lawyers	2,500	5,700
Others	4,300	9,800
	34,600	106,700

Following Stalin's slogan, 'Bolsheviks must master technology,' increased emphasis was laid, in the early 1930s, upon Party and Komsomol membership and proletarian origin in the selection of students for admission to institutions of higher education. This and other new measures which tended to sacrifice the quality of instruction to speed and quantity of output resulted in a further lowering of entrance requirements. In the provincial universities and technical schools many students were almost illiterate; some of them could barely read and write. At the same time the number of Party scholarship holders increased sharply.

By 1936, however, documentary evidence of proletarian origin had lost its significance and was formally abolished as an entrance requirement, largely for the simple reason that a new class of Soviet government employees, neither workers nor peasants, had developed, a class whose children could not very well be barred from institutions of higher education. In 1933, according to official Soviet sources, the proportion of workers was 51·4 per cent, and of peasants 16·5 per cent among university and technical school students. I have no official figures for later years, but such figures are chiefly noteworthy for the decrease which they indicate in the number of proletarian students and the corresponding increase in the number of children of government employees.

The entire period 1929–35 was characterised by continual experimentation in teaching methods. At the beginning of the period exclusive emphasis was laid upon the training of narrowly specialised technicians—'construction machinery engineers and canning engineers.' Then, after this programme had been tried for several years (for three years without requiring preparation or defence of a 'diploma project' or thesis), narrow specialisation was abandoned in favour of the training of more or less broadly educated specialists, with a corresponding increase in the period of study.

After initial experimentation, the 'laboratory' or 'brigade' method of instruction[1] and the 'Dalton Plan' were successively abandoned. New systems of evaluating students' work were tried. There were even different ways of seating them in lecture halls—e.g., having students remain in the same lecture hall for all classes; having special lecture halls with appropriate equipment for the various subjects; and assembling students from different courses in a common lecture hall for general lectures. 'Seminars' were also introduced (and subsequently abolished). After attending lectures students were supposed to 'work over' the material independently during cer-

[1] For a detailed account of this method in operation in a Soviet secondary school during the late 1920s, see above, pp. 26–30.—Ed.

tain specified hours in consultation with the professor or his assistant.

Throughout these various experiments, however, class attendance and examinations remained strictly obligatory.

Many of the newly established higher educational institutions, including engineering schools, lacked classroom and laboratory equipment, and there was a general and critical shortage of teaching personnel. Professors from older universities and technical schools in a given area were called upon to teach additional classes in the newer schools. Where such professors were not available, ordinary specialists—engineers or technicians—from neighbouring plants or factories were called in to give lectures on the side. Such 'professors' were not very successful as teachers, and their examination standards were not high. The result of all this was a sharp decline in the quality of instruction. Later the Soviet authorities themselves admitted that the quality of the specialists educated during this period was unsatisfactory.

The period of experimentation came to an end in the academic year 1935–36, with the closing of a large number of the new institutions of higher education and a general return to the older, pre-Revolutionary methods of instruction.

During this period higher education continued to be free, and government scholarships for maintenance were given to most students. The number of student dormitories increased considerably. 'Student towns' (groups of dormitory buildings) were put up in several cities, including Moscow. These were a great improvement over the dormitories of the 1920s. Students were no longer jammed by the dozen into single large rooms; instead, three or four were assigned to a room. To be sure, these rooms were not large, but they were fairly comfortable.

Scholarships (with the exception of Party scholarships) were insufficient for normal subsistence, but students resigned themselves to privation, and sometimes supplemented their scholarship money with part-time earnings. Except for the famine year of 1933, when many students had to give up their studies because of the truly starvation diet which was offered in the student dining rooms, Soviet students found it possible to obtain a higher education, whatever the state of their personal finances.

Though the various student privileges (reduced rates or free admission on certain forms of public transportation, theatres, etc.) continued throughout the period 1929–35, there was a marked shift in the attitude and temper of the student body—from a generally pro-Communist to a passive or concealed anti-Communist position. There were several reasons for this.

Between 1929 and 1931 a considerable number of students went into the villages on Party orders to help in the forced collectivisation of agriculture and the deportation of well-to-do peasants (the so-called 'dekulakization'). The ugly realities of these Bolshevik policies could not but disillusion those students who had hitherto believed implicitly in the beneficence of everything done by the Party.

Equally disillusioning was the outcome of the First Five-Year Plan, which, instead of the promised general prosperity, brought a sharp drop in the Soviet standard of living, including that of students. (It should be recalled that the First Five-Year Plan ended in the famine year of 1933.)

The 'new problems' which had so agitated the students of the 1920s gradually lost all interest for their successors of the early 1930s, probably for the following two reasons: (1) the complete failure of the 'new approach' to the problems of morality, family life, and everyday affairs; and (2) Stalin's removal of the most ardent advocates of the 'new' (nearly all of whom, as I have noted, supported Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Bukharin against Stalin in the late 1920s and early 1930s).

Students stopped flaunting the former 'proletarian' look and made a point of dressing as neatly as possible, within the limits imposed by their small stipends. At the same time interest in political speeches (genuine disputes or debates were no longer possible) was gradually replaced by concealed or open aversion. Attendance at political addresses and political study classes outside class hours, which was enforced by the Party committee, the Komsomol leadership, and the trade union, was looked upon by nearly everyone, including Komsomol and Party members among the students, as a waste of time. Students resorted to every possible pretext for avoiding such activities.

'Social activities' ('work for society')—with the exception of the groups devoted to sports, science, chess, and music—became semi-coercive in character. The secretary of the Party organisation, the Komsomol secretary, the chairman of the trade-union committee, and their assistants, were now obliged to apply pressure to get students to take part in the various campaigns, meetings, and conferences. Students accepted social duties reluctantly, as an alternative to possible suspicion of disloyalty to the regime.

At this time, students began to take a marked interest in both sports and social dancing. The government placed no obstacles in the way of such activities, and by the middle 1930s student dances were frequent events in Soviet institutions of higher education. Some of the students also began to dress in the 'European style';

girl students would no longer dream of wearing red kerchiefs; they now wanted permanent waves and pretty hats. The free relations between the sexes that had formerly been common among students were now out of the question.

The trade unions, which were organised in the universities and technical institutes during this period, were, like all Soviet trade unions, merely organs of the government intended to inculcate loyalty to the regime in the non-Party elements of the population. The head of an educational trade union is always a Party member, and he concerns himself with the same problems as the heads of the Party and Komsomol organisations, except that he limits his activities to non-Party students. In partial justification of their titles, school trade unions concerned themselves to some extent with bettering the lot of the students; this amounted in practice to distributing free passes to student rest-homes and free theatre tickets, arranging group visits to museums, and setting up kindergartens for children of students. It goes without saying that in the distribution of rest-home passes, which were issued by the government, priority was given to those students who had been most active in the social and political work directed by the trade union itself.

IV. The Stabilisation of Higher Education: 1936–1941

By 1936 the poor results of the previous educational experiments had led to a re-examination of policy and a sharp turn toward traditional methods of instruction. Newly founded 'institutions of higher learning' which in fact had no claim to such a title were closed. Enrolment was reduced; the number of students became stabilised at approximately 300,000. Certain of the privileges enjoyed by Party members were curtailed and—as we have seen—proletarian origin as an entrance requirement for institutions of higher education lost all significance. Major importance came to be attached to the results of the competitive entrance examinations and other evidence of academic qualifications; e.g., preference was given to 'outstanding students' (*otlichniki*) from the secondary schools—those with the grade *otlichno* or 'excellent' in at least three-quarters of their subjects, and 'good' in the rest.

All of this led to major shifts in the make-up of the student body. The overwhelming majority of the students were now young secondary-school graduates, rather than the older students, many of whom had been married people with families, who had formed the bulk of university and technical school students during the 1920s and early 1930s. The number of Party members among students

dwindled to insignificance, since most students were now younger than the minimum age limit for Party membership.[1]

The end of the 1930s was marked by two successive innovations:

(1) The introduction in December, 1939, of special 'Stalin scholarships' for academic excellence, fixed at 1,000 roubles a month for military academies and 500 roubles a month for other institutions of higher education. (For purposes of comparison, it should be recalled that the salary of an average engineer in Moscow at the time was about 600 roubles a month.)

(2) The introduction in 1940 of tuition fees for universities and technical institutes, and the abolition of scholarships for all but outstanding students. The latter measure meant in effect that henceforth not 'proletarians' but only the children of well-to-do parents would have the opportunity to receive a higher education.

I shall not dwell on this period here, as it is treated in sufficient detail in the concluding sections of this paper (those which deal specifically with the Moscow Construction Engineering Institute).

V. The War Years: 1941–1945

During the Second World War almost all higher educational institutions, with the exception of those on territory occupied by the enemy, remained in operation, although the number of students decreased sharply and probably did not exceed 100,000 for the most part. The most striking feature of this period was the predominance of women students in all civilian universities and technical institutes. Many of them became, in effect, schools for women. This was especially true of the medical schools, which even before the war attracted more women than men students.

When the war ended, many returning soldiers found that their fiancees were now university graduates beside whom they themselves appeared virtual ignoramuses. This disparity of educational background broke up many engagements.

VI. The Postwar Period: 1945–1953

I left the USSR during the war and am therefore unable to give a very full picture of the current state of Soviet higher education. But, according to the information at my disposal, the situation is about as follows:

The number and character of Soviet institutions of higher education is the same as before the war, with a few insignificant changes. The student body remains about the same—between 250,000 and

[1] I.e., younger than twenty-six years of age. Of course, younger students were eligible for Komsomol membership (aged sixteen to twenty-six).—Ed.

300,000.[1] The government continues to be primarily interested in the training of engineers and 'educational workers.' The majority of students now belong to the new Soviet 'aristocracy,' i.e. they are children of persons who have been sufficiently well rewarded by the regime to be able to afford the tuition and maintenance of a student during five years of study. This aristocracy is not, as some people assume, made up exclusively of Party members; it also includes non-Party people who are highly valued, and hence highly paid, by the Soviet government—technical and scientific specialists, composers, writers, actors, and Stakhanovites. For children of other classes of the population, especially the peasants, a higher education has become virtually unattainable, for two reasons: (1) the extremely low standard of living and lack of savings among the bulk of the Soviet population; and (2) the compulsory 'recruiting' of adolescents—similar to military conscription—into industrial, vocational, and elementary military schools (Suvorov schools), the object of which is to turn out simple skilled workers or ordinary enlisted men. Upon graduation such young men are obliged to work at whatever job and in whatever place they are ordered to by the government. In addition, most of them are mobilised for an extended period of military service, so that for them the opportunity for higher education is virtually nonexistent.

The teaching methods which were worked out shortly before the war ensure the training of highly competent specialists. (Details are given below.) The chief administrative change was the replacement of the pre-war Committee on University Affairs of the Council of People's Commissars by a Ministry of Higher Education, bringing all institutions of higher education—which were formerly subordinated to various ministries (commissariats)—under a single ministry, and making for complete standardisation of curricula and teaching methods. (The remaining exceptions to this general centralisation were: military academies, Party schools and universities, and certain special schools—under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence, the Party Central Committee, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), respectively.)

[1] Soviet sources give substantially higher figures, e.g., 974,000 in 1952 'for schools of university level.' Cf. K. Hulička, 'Political Education in Soviet Schools,' *Soviet Studies*, Vol. V, No. 2 (1953), p. 149. However, since Mr. Ivanov's figures apply to the pre-1939 territory of the Soviet Union (subsequently enlarged by the absorption of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, parts of Poland, Rumania, etc.), and exclude military academies, Party schools and universities, and special schools—which are under the jurisdiction of the Defence Ministry, the Party Central Committee, and the MVD, rather than the Ministry of Higher Education—the contrast between his and the Soviet statistics, while considerable, is not as striking as it at first appears.—Ed.

Soviet students of the present day have definitely lost interest in and sympathy for Communist policies, in spite of the fact that most of them are children of the new Soviet aristocracy. There is no ferment of Communist ideas in anyone's head. Lip-service to these ideas is regarded as a necessary condition for furthering one's career, a sort of required Soviet ritual. Personal interests, and the interests of one's own career, as well as a desire to enjoy the experiences of the moment, prevail over all other considerations. At the same time there is a keen interest in science, and in recent years an increased interest in foreign languages. The desire to stay clear of all 'social activity' can no longer be concealed. The prohibition of [certain] Western dance steps in the Soviet Union does not interfere with entertainment and recreation on the part of students—not in the form of 'social activities,' but as private parties among intimate friends, some of which are straight drinking bouts. At such parties political discussion, either for or against the Soviet regime, is strictly taboo. Among students there is contempt and scepticism for both Soviet policy and the policies of the non-Soviet countries of the West. Social ideals (which were always so central a concern of Russian students) no longer exist—if we except the 'ideal' of a personal career at whatever cost to oneself or others. Nevertheless, Soviet students follow world events closely and form their own opinions of everything that happens, expressing such opinions to no one. These opinions are nearly always unflattering to the leaders of contemporary mankind.

In appearance, Soviet students try to look as respectable, even 'aristocratic,' as possible; they have a marked sense of their own worth and a certain feeling of superiority toward non-students, whose company they tend to avoid, confining their associations to a more or less closed circle. This new generation of Soviet aristocrats, born during the first Five-Year Plan, and therefore knowing collectivisation and the early period of industrialisation only by hearsay, is undoubtedly animated by a different spirit from that of its predecessors who have seen and experienced more, and made more mistakes—even becoming infected with the disease of Communism and then recovering from the infection. Contemporary Soviet young people have no desire to be infected with anything, and they have contracted nothing from which to recover. In this respect they also differ sharply from pre-Revolutionary students, who were much agitated by political and social questions and tended toward radical solutions of such questions. But one thing can definitely be said of them: they will make very good specialists in their various professions.

VII. The Moscow Kuibyshev Institute of Construction Engineering

In order to enter the Kuibyshev Institute of Construction Engineering in 1935, I had to apply in writing to the Committee on Admissions, enclosing a brief autobiography, a ten-year school diploma, a document indicating military status if any (this was for those of conscription age only), a document showing last place of permanent residence, a document as to last place of employment, and a document as to the 'social status' of my parents. (1935 was the last year in which this latter document was required.) In addition, I had to present my passport and fill out a special questionnaire, the chief purpose of which was to discover whether the applicant, his parents, or any of his relatives had ever been convicted by a Soviet court for an act against the Soviet government, and also whether the applicant or his parents had relatives or friends abroad and whether they corresponded with them. Party or Komsomol membership (or non-membership) was also given prominent attention in considering the applicant's qualifications.

In 1935 there were about 600 applicants for the 150 openings at the institute (this was nearly a hundred fewer openings than in 1934).[1] The basic criterion for admission was the applicant's grade on the competitive entrance examination, but this examination could be taken only by those applicants whose documents and questionnaires evoked no suspicion of disloyalty to the regime. Applicants came from all parts of the Soviet Union and included many non-Russians —Georgians, Armenians, Jews, Tatars, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, etc. Nationality and place of residence played no part in the admission procedure; this information was included on the questionnaire only to enable the administration of the institute to plan room assignments in the dormitories on the basis of the number of out-of-town students.

The entrance examination was standard for all engineering schools. Examinees were expected to have a thorough mastery (at the ten-year-school level) of: Russian, mathematics, physics, chemistry, drafting, and the history of Russia and the USSR. In addition, for schools of construction engineering one had to pass an examination in free-hand drawing.

About August 1, I was notified by the Committee on Admissions that I would be admitted to the entrance examination. I immediately applied for a leave of absence from my job. Administrative officers of Soviet enterprises have the right to deny leaves of absence to their employees, but in 1935 they were placing no obstacles in the way of

[1] The reasons for this decrease in the number of students are discussed above, p. 169.

those wishing to enter institutions of higher learning. Upon my arrival in Moscow I was assigned, with other out-of-town applicants, to a place for study and a bed in one of the institute dormitories. We took examinations on a strict schedule over a period of two weeks, one full day being allotted to each subject.

All the examinations were very stiff, and no one was excused from them except the *otlichniki*[1] who, unless they aroused political suspicion, were admitted to the institute without further ado. The examinations, which were conducted by two or more representatives of the institute's teaching staff, consisted of an initial written problem or theme, followed by informal discussion and oral questioning, without the set outline employed in many Soviet educational institutions. The examiners recorded their evaluation of the applicant's performance in a special book (containing a photograph of the applicant) according to a five-point scale: 'excellent'—5; 'good'—4; 'fair'—3; 'unsatisfactory'—2 or 1. The numerical grades on the various examinations were added together to give a total for the whole set of examinations; only students with the highest totals were admitted to the institute. But a student who received a 2 or 1 in even a single subject, however well he might have done in the others, was automatically rejected. No exceptions were made in this respect, even for Party or Komsomol members. However, Party members who passed in all subjects (with grades of 3 or better) were given preference over other applicants, even though the latter might have much higher grades. Komsomol members, on the other hand, got preference over non-Komsomol applicants only when their grades were the same as the latter's.

The final list of those admitted to the institute, signed by the director, was posted on a bulletin board, and notice was given to the entrants to prepare for the opening of classes on September 1. Everyone admitted to the institute was automatically provided with a government scholarship and nonresidents were assigned a place in the student dormitories. As I have already indicated, there were no tuition fees at this time (i.e., before 1940).

VIII. The Programme of Studies

In Soviet engineering schools the first and second courses (first and second years of study) are called 'general technical courses'; the third, fourth, and fifth courses are called 'specialised technical courses.' Students are divided into classes of twenty-five to thirty-five for the general technical subjects: mathematics, mechanics, strength of materials, drafting, etc. Beginning with the third course, they are

[1] See above, p. 169.—Ed.

required to elect a special field falling within one of the faculties of the institute. In the Kuibyshev Construction Engineering Institute this procedure was modified to permit students to specialise from the first year, and each applicant for admission was required to indicate which of the six faculties he wished to enter. The faculties were titled as follows:

Civil and industrial construction
Hydraulic engineering construction
Highway construction
Mechanisation of construction
Water-supply and sewage
Heating and ventilation.

The first two faculties were the largest, having two classes in each course; the others had one class in each. Moreover, the classes in the first two faculties were larger than those in the rest. I was enrolled in the Faculty of Hydraulic Engineering Construction.

During the first two years we studied the following subjects: higher mathematics, theoretical mechanics (statics, kinematics, and dynamics), descriptive geometry, drafting, free-hand drawing, physics, chemistry, hydraulics, structural materials, strength of materials, geodetics (theoretical and applied), a foreign language (German or English), physical education, and political subjects (political economy, and dialectical and historical materialism). During these two years about 350 hours were devoted to mathematics, including plane and spherical analytic geometry, differential and integral calculus, and elements of vector analysis. In addition we gained a general familiarity with advanced algebra, nomography, and the theory of series, as well as the use of the slide-rule. Descriptive geometry included the theory of light and shadow, perspective, and reflections in water (these topics were limited to schools of construction engineering). The physics course included the theory of light, electricity, and atomic structure. The work in chemistry was not very advanced, but we covered the main concepts and theories of modern inorganic chemistry (organic chemistry was not studied).

In our faculty, hydraulics was studied in great detail, including the most difficult equations of hydrodynamics. In the other faculties it was presented in a less detailed and somewhat simplified form. However, strength of materials was regarded as of prime importance for all students and was studied very thoroughly for two years. The foreign language was taught for two hours a week during the first three years, at the end of which time students were able to translate technical material from German or English into Russian. They gained no fluency in speaking the language.

Physical education included calisthenics, work on gymnasium equipment (parallel bars, high bar, flying rings, 'horse,' etc.), as well as running, swimming, and skiing. Students had to meet the GTO standards[1] in running, swimming, skiing, and jumping, as well as grenade-throwing and small-arms marksmanship. Political subjects have already been discussed in some detail. They took up four hours a week during the first three years, but in engineering schools such subjects did not bulk large in the total programme. Students looked upon them as a necessary evil, a 'mastery' of which—i.e., an ability to repeat the current Party formulas without criticism or even equivalent rewording—was needed to pass the examinations.

Beginning with the third year, all students who had not served in the armed forces were placed in special 'militarised groups' for training as reserve officers in the engineering corps. Because of the additional burden of military studies, these students had to spend an additional year at the institute, making a total of six years.[2] Upon graduating they were not required to serve in the armed forces except for three months of military camp each year. (This sort of military training outside the armed forces has been discontinued in Soviet engineering schools.) One week out of each month over a period of two years (third and fourth courses) was devoted to military studies. In addition there were summer military camps of two months' duration, one each year for two years; at the end of the second summer camp students were commissioned as junior lieutenants, lieutenants, or (very rarely) senior lieutenants in the Engineering Corps Reserve of the Red Army. During their fifth and sixth years students in the militarised groups returned to full-time study without further interruption for military subjects.

In the Faculty of Hydraulic Engineering Construction the last three years were devoted to the following specialised subjects:

Hydrology
Hydrometry
Hydraulic construction
Hydro-technical machinery
Structural mechanics
Metal structures
Reinforced concrete structures

[1] See above, p. 75, footnote 1.—Ed.

[2] As it happened, I myself completed the course in *five* years (1935–40); but this exception to the general six-year rule was due to my having taken the first-year work by correspondence course at a provincial institute. Although when I first applied to the Kuibyshev Institute I had to take the regular first-year examinations, I was soon permitted to 'accomplish' the first-year courses and proceed directly to second-year work.

Wooden structures
Bridges
Foundations
Parts of buildings
Production procedures in construction work
Reclamation work
Fire prevention
Political subjects (Economic policy of the USSR, and, after 1938, Party history, using the *Short Course* as a text)
Foreign language

I may have omitted one or two of the specialised subjects from this list. All together, in the five years of study students had to take examinations in forty-two subjects, not counting military studies. The latter (exclusively for the militarised group) were as follows:

Tactics
Weapons: rifle and machine-gun
Military drill
Military regulations
Military bridges
Ferry construction and ford operations
Mines and demolition work
Army engineering work (blindages, anti-tank works, etc.)
Physical education (in its military applications)

The final year (the sixth for the militarised group, the fifth for other students) was entirely devoted to the preparation of the diploma project.

Students had to work in some factory or construction project during summer vacations; this was a special subject listed in the curriculum under 'practice.' Reports and oral examinations were required in this subject as well.

The school week consisted of six days, including Saturday, of which three were six-hour days and three eight-hour days. Classes began at 8.30 in the morning and continued on the six-hour days until 2.20, on the eight-hour days until 4.10. An academic hour consisted of fifty minutes in class with a five-minute intermission. After the first four hours there was a thirty-minute break for lunch. The beginning and end of each hour were marked by a bell; attendance was compulsory and absence from even one class was regarded as an offence serious enough to subject the student in question to disciplinary action—a reprimand from the directors, or, in case of repeated unexcused absences, expulsion from school.

Students also had many hours of assigned homework which they did on Sundays and in the evenings. Most of the technical subjects required considerable skill in computation and in techniques of construction and design. To develop these skills, professors gave problems, some of them full-scale engineering projects, to be worked out by a certain date. Students who failed to complete these projects were refused admission to the next examination.

Examinations were given in all subjects at the end of each semester; students were expected to answer oral questions and do written problems on all of the material covered in the course to date. Those who received grades of 'unsatisfactory' in one or at most two subjects were permitted to take another examination within six months, during the next examination period. Those who received grades of 'unsatisfactory' in more than two subjects, as well as those who failed to pass the repeat examinations, were 'flunked out.' Moreover, failure in even one subject automatically disqualified students for government scholarships during the following half-year. In this connection, all subjects were considered of equal importance —physical education along with theoretical and technical subjects.

The academic year began on September 1 and ended on June 1, after which there was a month's vacation. The period from July 1 to September 1 was devoted to 'practice.' Between semesters there was a two weeks' vacation. For the militarised groups the summer recess was lengthened by two months (extending from May 1 to October 1), during which period these students had a month's vacation, two months of military camp, and two months of 'practice.'

IX. Organisation of the Institute

Zen'kov, the director of the institute, was a Party member and a political figure, with no academic standing whatever. At first he was responsible to the Ministry of Heavy Industry, then to the newly organised Ministry of Construction; at present the director of the Kuibyshev Institute of Construction Engineering is under the Ministry of Higher Education.

Professor Stramentov, the Deputy Director in charge of Academic Matters, was an old specialist—a lecturer in theoretical mechanics —with a great deal of academic experience. There was also a deputy director in charge of financial and administrative matters; he, like the director, was a Party member. Under the Deputy Director in charge of Academic Matters there were the six deans who headed the six special faculties (listed above), as well as the heads of the various departments of general academic subjects: mathematics, theoretical mechanics, physics, drafting, foreign languages, etc. The departments of specialised technical subjects were under the

deans of the corresponding faculties. The department of political studies (Marxism-Leninism) was directly under the institute director, but he had no control over the content of the lectures, which was fixed by the Party Central Committee.

The department of military science was in a special position, being under the authority of the War Ministry.

Department heads were among the best professors in the given subject; the rest of the professors, assistants, and instructors in that subject were under their direction, as was the work of graduate students. Department heads had to follow course programmes handed down from above, but they were able to influence the content of these programmes somewhat, since they were always invited to conferences in the various ministries at which programmes were drawn up or amended. They were also in charge of the laboratory equipment and teaching aids for their subject and were allotted funds for this purpose from the institute's budget. Such funds were issued quite freely; the institute had excellent laboratories and teaching aids in almost every subject.

The deans of the faculties were outstanding authorities in their particular fields. For example, Professor Grishin, Dean of the Faculty of Hydraulic Engineering Construction, had worked closely with the late Academician Alexandrov. However, their assistants were all Party members, engineers of Soviet vintage without professional standing. The deans were directly in charge of the instruction of students in their faculties, and were responsible for the administration of scholarships, and for the dormitories, vacations, class attendance, industrial practice, and examinations.

The institute had the following administrative offices:

(1) A clerical and typing office, the staff of which typed all official papers and mimeographed all class schedules and teaching materials; it was the only such office in the institute. No one in the institute, not even the director's personal secretary, was permitted to have a typewriter in his or her room or office. The text of all official papers had to be written out in long-hand and given to the senior typist, who submitted them to censorship before having them typed.

(2) The 'Special Section,' the chief of which was answerable solely to the NKVD. One of his duties was checking on the political reliability of everyone in the institute, from the director down to the students and cloakroom attendants. His office was in a closed room; he could be communicated with only through a small window in the door. He kept the seal of the institute (which even the director did not have) and placed it on documents signed by the director or his deputies only after thorough scrutiny. It was he who censored the long-hand materials presented to the typing office.

The chief of the Special Section recruited secret agents from every group in the institute and kept dossiers on everyone, placing in them reports from these agents and derogatory material from other sources. Only after the disappearance of some particular professor or student could one surmise that he had been arrested by the NKVD. No one ever gave any reason for such disappearances, and no one ever asked for reasons. This may seem incredible to the reader, but it is a fact.

(3) The Party committee of the institute exercised authority over all Party members in the institute, including the director himself. By the mid-1930s, when I entered the institute, there were very few Party members left among the students. In my class of fifteen (the militarised group of the Faculty of Hydraulic Engineering Construction) there were none at all; about half were Komsomol members; the rest (including myself) were non-Party students. In such cases, where there were no Party members in a group, the Party committee exercised political control over the group through the Komsomol organiser. The Party committee concerned itself with the political education of students—through meetings, obligatory demonstrations in Red Square on Soviet holidays, and the organisation of extracurricular political study groups and political campaigns (loan drives, collection of signatures on Party proclamations, sending of greetings to Stalin, etc.).

(4) The Komsomol committee exercised functions analogous to those of the Party committee, except that it directed its attention toward Komsomol members and gave its activities a more youthful slant—e.g., the arranging of parties and other recreation.

(5) The trade-union committee was 'elected' by all the members of the construction-workers' union to which the students and teachers of the institute belonged. (Refusal to join would have been interpreted as evidence of disloyalty to the regime.) In fact, these elections took place under heavy pressure from the Party committee and those elected were always 'reliable' from the Party point of view. I have already noted that the political education of non-Party students was entrusted to the trade-union committee. This education was not as completely political as that carried out by the Party and Komsomol committees; in fact, it amounted to little more than the organisation of 'socialist competition' for higher grades among the students, the sponsoring of all sorts of clubs and circles devoted to everything from science to chess, and the distribution of free passes, etc. The trade union also had a fund intended to supply loans or even outright gifts to needy students. But in handing out these benefits, preference was given to students prominent in the 'social activities' directed by the committee. (Later, priority gradually shifted to academically

outstanding students, regardless of the extent of their participation in such activities.)

This general organisational set-up was characteristic not only of the institute as a whole, but also of smaller groups within it, down to single classes. Our small class (fifteen students) included three students with special authority: the class monitor, responsible to the Dean of the Faculty; the Komsomol organiser—who also assumed the functions of the Party organiser, there being no Party members in the class—responsible to the Party and Komsomol committees; and the trade-union organiser, responsible to the trade-union committee. These three students were supposed to organise the everyday activities, study, and leisure of the students in the class. They took all decisions on such matters jointly, and in fact constituted a kind of miniature Politburo. It was they who decided whether or not students would have to attend meetings, take part in competitions (e.g., group ski races), or carry out some outside assignment after their class work was finished. There were so many of these social burdens that most students had no free time at all except during vacation periods.

X. Student Life

Until the spring of 1940[1] (at which time, as it happened, I graduated from the institute) we were all provided with government scholarships in the following amounts: first year—135 roubles per month; second year—160 roubles; third year—185 roubles; last two years—210 roubles. These figures applied only to Moscow; elsewhere in the Soviet Union the stipends were 10 roubles less per month. For purposes of comparison, it should be recalled that the monthly wage of an unskilled labourer in Moscow at the time was about 250 roubles and that of an average engineer about 600.

All the students in my class of fifteen, except for three or four whose homes were in Moscow, lived in the dormitory, a five-story building located in a student town on Dorogomilovsk Avenue, on the outskirts of Moscow. The long corridors of this building were lined with small rooms intended to accommodate two students each, but used by three or four students. The rooms were so crowded that besides the beds, one table, and three small stools, nothing else could be squeezed in. We each paid fifteen roubles a month for the room; for this sum the room was kept warm and lighted, the corridors were cleaned, and a doorman sat at the entrance refusing admission to visitors who did not have the permission of the person they wished to see. There was a library, a refreshment stand, a recreation room, and

[1] After the spring of 1940 only the *otlichniki*, of whom there was a negligible number in our institute, continued to receive scholarships.

even billiard tables (free of charge) in the dormitory. Each room had a radio loudspeaker which was tuned in to a single programme, that of the Moscow broadcasting system, uniform for all Muscovites. The student town also contained a skating rink and a kindergarten for children of married students. The latter were assigned an entire room, but only one, whatever the size of their family.

We ate frugally, as our stipends did not permit of better fare. In the morning, as a rule, we ate nothing at all. Rising at seven, we washed hastily and hurried off to the institute so as not to be late for the first lecture (8.30). During the half-hour lunch period we ate hurriedly in the student dining-room or at the refreshment stand in the institute. Lunch cost from one to three roubles. After classes and whatever meetings or other social activities were scheduled for the day, we ate our main meal in the student dining room; this was usually between five and six o'clock. We had our third meal in the dormitory before turning in; it consisted of cheap food bought at a store—a few chunks of bread and perhaps 100 grammes (about 3 ounces) of sausage, washed down with tea. (Boiling water was always available in the dormitory.) There was an unwritten tradition that students should eat their fill once—and only once—a month: on the day that they received their scholarship money.

After supper, most students stayed in the library or drafting room doing homework assignments until ten or eleven o'clock. Then we went back to the dormitory, had tea, listened to the latest news broadcast, and got to bed about midnight. Students who had no pressing assignments, or who had managed to finish them early, and were temporarily free of social burdens, would rush off to find some kind of part-time work in order to earn a little 'sock money.' Sundays and holidays were mostly spent in doing homework. Nevertheless, if a student could afford a play ticket, or if he got one free through the trade-union committee, he generally postponed his homework and went to the theatre. The same was true of the cinema. Sports fans, devotees of billiards or chess, usually managed to find time for their favourite recreations during the course of the evening.

Sports events, both intramural and between institutes, were encouraged by the administration. Our institute had good facilities for basketball, volleyball, gymnastics, boxing, and other sports, including marksmanship. Certain privileges were accorded to the best athletes when they got into academic difficulties; they were not expelled for failure, but were allowed to repeat the course a second time even if they had more examinations to repeat (or had delayed longer) than they were supposed to. Outstanding athletes were provided with whatever they needed free of charge. Such privileges undoubtedly increased student participation in sports.

During vacation periods the trade-union committee furnished free rest-home passes to certain students. Students with the best academic records and most intensive social activity were sent to lush resorts in the Caucasus or Crimea. This pass system was much abused in favour of Party and Komsomol members, but there were cases in which non-Party students received passes. I once got a pass to a resort in the Caucasus for making the highest score in the institute on the final examinations (all 'excellents'). In the rest homes, students were very well fed without charge for two weeks or a month, and were given a chance to relax completely. The sports organisations sometimes arranged excursions, trips, and even mountain-climbing expeditions, at the institute's expense, for student groups. Most students, however, did not get rest-home passes or free trips; they spent their vacations visiting their families and working to earn money.

During the period of summer industrial 'practice' students were not supposed to hold paying jobs; they were expected to live on their regular scholarship money and limit their work to observing and practising various construction jobs under the guidance of a professor or competent engineer. As a matter of fact, however, almost all students got some paying job in construction work. This pay served to eke out their scholarship money so that they could buy a few items of clothing and not have to spend everything on food and transportation.

On the whole, under the conditions prevailing in the late 1930s, Soviet students who were willing to work hard could complete their higher education without financial assistance from family or friends. Since 1940, as I have said, this is no longer the case.

Despite their heavy schedules, the institute students studied enthusiastically and looked upon their academic work as of central importance. Professors enjoyed full respect and authority; and the the better they knew and could impart their subject, the greater was their authority. 'Social burdens' were universally disliked, even by Party and Komsomol members. There was no open protest against these necessary evils, but there was covert sabotage.

We were in the institute at a time (1937–38) when vast purges were taking place in the USSR, and not a few professors and students disappeared from the institute for reasons unknown to anyone. All students were intensely aware of the need for extreme caution and the avoidance of any ground for accusations of disloyalty; there was no question of protests, even of the most innocent kind. The knowledge that there were secret agents in every class was a further incentive to discretion in matters political. Students listened eagerly to political news on the radio and in the newspapers, but no

one ever expressed an opinion either for or against a given Soviet action or policy. Only on formal occasions—at meetings, or in examinations on Marxism-Leninism—and then under pressure of necessity, did students extol 'the wisdom of the beloved teacher and leader, Comrade Stalin' in well-worn phrases borrowed from the Soviet press. Even among the Party functionaries themselves there were almost none who were sincere in such fulsome praise: the standardised, laboured quality of these clichés was too obvious to everyone.

Student conversations were confined to school affairs, matters of everyday life, literature, art, sports, and similar subjects; they never touched on political subjects. There was no feeling of opposition toward the regime among the overwhelming majority of students when they first entered the institute; they were, after all, but yesterday's schoolchildren, unaware as yet of actual Soviet conditions—such, for example, as those in the forced-labour camps. However, all of us—especially the students in hydraulic engineering construction—when we undertook our first practical work, had a chance to observe conditions at a large construction project (the hydroelectric power station at Rybinsk) which was being built by inmates of concentration camps under NKVD supervision. This experience opened the eyes of many students, changing their attitude from one of approval or indifference to one of condemnation of Soviet policies. Nevertheless, the relatively good treatment accorded students caused many of them to try to find excuses and justifications for the criminal acts of the Politburo. (At present, students no longer attempt to find such excuses, since higher education is no longer open to everyone as it was in my day.[1]) I cannot report any student plots or conspiracies directed against the regime; so far as I know there were none, because of the utter hopelessness of such attempts and the extraordinary risk attendant upon their failure.

In our class of fifteen there were eight non-Russians: two Armenians, two Jews, one Ukrainian, one Byelorussian, one Tatar, and one German. I can attest to the complete absence of racial discrimination and hostility; we all lived together like members of one family. Neither did I encounter any feeling of estrangement between Russians and non-Russians or any tendency of Russians to dominate non-Russians. I have heard of this only in the West and only from those who are not familiar with Soviet conditions.

Our most distinguished professors were older specialists who had been educated in the pre-Revolutionary period. Some of them had been prominent under the Tsar—for instance, Dzhunkovski, our professor of hydraulic construction, two of whose close relatives

[1] See note on page 31.

had been Tsarist governors. (Dzhunkovski teaches at the institute to this day.) In the department of military science there were two Tsarist generals, Shifrin and Segerkrants. But in certain subjects, and among the instructors, there were a number of Soviet-educated people, including a few Party members. Some of them were highly competent and in no way inferior to the older professors, and they commanded equal respect from the students.

It is difficult to judge the attitudes or sentiments of the professors, since they confined their conversations with students to academic subjects, never entered into close personal relationships with any of them, and maintained a marked formality and reserve in the classroom. However, it was obvious that they were fond of their better students, since they loved everything connected with their professional work. The laboratories and teaching aids were constantly being improved through the efforts of the teaching staff, and the government did not hamper but rather encouraged them in this effort.

There were only twenty-five or thirty graduate students in the institute—one or two in each main department—but they were popular with the professors. To be admitted to graduate work, students had to take competitive examinations in three subjects: their own special field, Marxism-Leninism, and a foreign language. After two years of graduate study, they had to write dissertations and defend them before a government commission; successful defence brought them the degree of 'Candidate of Sciences.'

All students, upon completion of their required courses of study, had to prepare diploma projects—construction projects planned, calculated, and traced by the student. (Blueprinting equipment, being under NKVD control, was not available for student use.) This involved, on the average, 100 pages of computations and twelve to fifteen drawings. The time allotted for this work—four months—was exceedingly short.[1] To complete the project by the deadline, students had to work from morning until late at night seven days a week. All such students were assigned to a special room in the institute, and during this time they were not bothered with social burdens. The project had to be defended before a government commission, headed by a prominent scientist. The commission was made up of fifteen members and rendered its decision as a body. During the project defence, the student's general engineering knowledge was also tested. Successful defence led to a diploma in engineering and the title of engineer. Special distinction in the defence brought a diploma 'with honours.' Failure before the commission meant that

[1] The remainder of the academic year was taken up with vacations, certain supplementary lectures, and a period of waiting for the formal defence of the completed diploma project.

the student received no diploma, but such students were given the opportunity to repeat the examination after a minimum interval of one year. The title conferred at our institute was the general one of 'Construction Engineer,' but to this was added some such specification as 'Hydraulic Construction' (this was true in my own case).

No one in the USSR can seek work for himself; everyone must work at the job to which he is assigned, and engineering assignments were made by a special commission in advance of the graduation examinations. This commission was headed by the Deputy Commissar of Construction; its members represented various large-scale Soviet construction organisations, including the NKVD, which controls and operates some of the most extensive hydraulic and hydroelectric projects. The commission asked each young engineer where he would prefer to work, but usually paid little if any attention to his expressed preferences. Engineers were sent wherever they were currently needed, frequently to the most remote sections of the country. Each young engineer was given a paper to sign, stating that he was going to this job by his own free choice. I know of no instance of a refusal to sign such papers, even when the student was strongly opposed to the job in question. Every graduate of the institute was well aware that a refusal to go where he was assigned would be regarded as an act of sabotage—with all the consequences which that entails under Soviet conditions.

I was put at the disposal of the Department of Hydraulic Engineering of the NKVD Main Administration for Camps, which planned to send me to the naval installations near Vladivostok. But thanks to the intervention on my behalf of Professor Grishin, dean of our faculty, who was in charge of planning the Kuibyshev hydroelectric station, I was sent to work in Kuibyshev on the Volga. This was also an NKVD project; the labour was supplied by prisoners. However, I did not stay long because the work was halted and not resumed until after the war. Instead, I was sent to work on a construction project near the town of Vytegra (not far from Lake Onezhsk, to the north of Leningrad). There the work was also done by prisoners.

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